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THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY.

(LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON.)

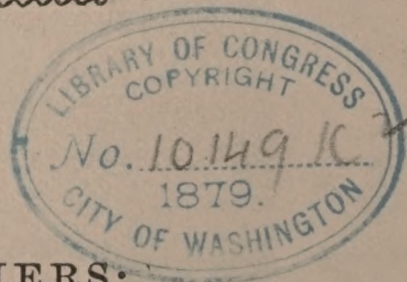
BY ÉMILE ZOLA.

AUTHOR OF "L'ASSOMMOIR," "HELENE, A LOVE EPISODE," OR,
"UNE PAGE D'AMOUR," "THE ABBE'S TEMPTATION," OR,
"LA FAUTE DE L'ABBE MOURET," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY JOHN STIRLING.

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*In "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY" Zola depicts people as he sees them, but not through jaundiced eyes; he sets down their passions and their weaknesses, their petty jealousies, and small rivalries; his heart is as tender as his pen is forcible, while his love of Nature is apparent in every chapter he writes; his descriptions of scenery and flowers are as minute as his dissection of the human heart. No reader, however careless, can peruse unmoved the pathetic story of Silvere and Miette, which is as absolutely tender and touching as anything known in modern fiction. Their innocent love and the terrible tragedy by which it is crowned; the vivid description of the Coup d'État in the Provinces, where the cause of liberty struggled for two weeks instead of dying as in Paris at the end of forty-eight hours, form a series of dramatic pictures which the translator commends to his readers with the conviction that they, on taking up the book, will not lay it down until finished, for no one can deny that Zola has painted his pictures in colors which can never fade.*  
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1879.

L'Assommoir. A Novel. By *Émile Zola*, the great French novelist. Over One Hundred Thousand Copies have already been sold in France of "L'Assommoir."

"L'ASSOMMOIR" is one of the greatest novels ever printed, and has already attained a sale in France of over One Hundred Thousand Copies. It will be found to be one of the most extraordinary works ever written, full of nature and of art, dramatic, narrative, and pictorial. In it, vice is never made attractive, but "Zola" paints it in all its hideous reality, so that it may tend to a moral end, for in it he unquestionably calls "a spade a spade." As a picture of woe and degradation springing from drunkenness, "L'Assommoir" is without a rival. Zola has attained a measure of success scarcely paralleled in our generation, and his themes and his style, his aims, methods, and performances provoke the widest attention and the liveliest discussions throughout the whole of Europe. The translator, John Stirling, has done his work in the most able and satisfactory manner.

The Rougon-Macquart Family; or, La Fortune des Rougon.

By *Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "Hélène," "The Abbé's Temptation."

In "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY" Zola depicts people as he sees them, but not through jaundiced eyes; he sets down their passions and their weaknesses, their petty jealousies, and small rivalries; his heart is as tender as his pen is forcible, while his love of Nature is apparent in every chapter he writes; his descriptions of scenery and flowers are as minute as his dissection of the human heart. No reader, however careless, can peruse unmoved the pathetic story of *Silvère* and *Miette*, which is as absolutely tender and touching as anything known in modern fiction. Their innocent love and the terrible tragedy by which it is crowned; the vivid description of the *Coup d'État* in the Provinces, where the cause of liberty struggled for two weeks instead of dying as in Paris at the end of forty-eight hours, form a series of dramatic pictures which the translator commends to his readers with the conviction that they, on taking up the book, will not lay it down until finished, for no one can deny that Zola has painted his pictures in colors which can never fade.

The Abbé's Temptation; or, La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret. A

Love Story. By *Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "Hélène," etc.

"THE ABBÉ'S TEMPTATION," by *Émile Zola*, writes one of the most noted literary editors in New York, to John Stirling, the translator, "is the sweetest love story I ever read, and is a great book, for there is much in the work that is lovely and pathetic. It is a work of marvellous ability, not immoral in any sense, while it teaches a great lesson. As Zola depicts the innocent love and purity of the unhappy Abbé, one can scarce believe that he, who wrote 'L'Assommoir,' can be the author of this sweet, pathetic love story."

Hélène, a Love Episode; or, Une Page D'Amour. By *Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "The Abbé's Temptation; or, La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret."

"ÉMILE ZOLA" is the greatest author in France at the present day. His novel "L'Assommoir," published by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, has already had a sale in France of over One Hundred Thousand Copies, and "Hélène," which is extremely interesting—indeed, exciting—lately issued there, has already passed into its forty-eighth edition. "Hélène" is admirably written, and is full of powerful and life-like delineations of character. It is the great sensation in Paris, for the book is admirably written by a truly great artist. The characters and scenes in "Hélène" are well conceived and well executed, and it is impossible to deny the author's great skill, for every reader will acknowledge "Zola's" great power in "Hélène." Besides the story, there are many pages devoted to rapturous descriptions of Paris at sunrise, at noonday, at sunset, and at night. Zola has made his name famous, and he will find plenty of readers for all he writes."

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

"THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY," OR, "LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON," is the first in a series of volumes—each complete in itself, and yet having the same persons appear with more or less persistency in all. For example, in the present work, we see the childhood and early womanhood of GERVAISE, whose painful history is told with such startling fidelity in "L'ASSOMMOIR," while HÉLÈNE, whose name has given the title to the translation of "UNE PAGE D'AMOUR"—the first translation by the way published from Zola in this country—flits across the pages in the other volumes to be issued in rapid succession—"LA CONQUÊTE DE PLASSANS," "LE VENTRE DE PARIS," "LA CURÉE," and "SON EXCELLENCE EUGÈNE ROUGON." We again see SERGE, the sad priest, in "THE ABBE'S

TEMPTATION," or, "LA FAUTE DE L'ABBE MOURET," and the inimitable FÉLICITÉ, as well as the kindly DR. PASCAL, and the pretty, half-witted DESIRÉE.

Zola wrote this series with the purpose and idea of delineating the physiological development of a race having as its predominant characteristic the determination to gratify their appetites at all costs to themselves and others.

He depicts in each individual the sentiments, desires and passions—all those human manifestations in short, which take the name either of virtues or vices.

This race is essentially of the people—is diffused through all classes—and demonstrates the effect on France, and on its social circles, of the Second Empire.

"THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY," OR, "LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON," will show Zola to many of our readers in a new light—that of a humorous writer—as nothing can well be more delicious in the way of satirical humor than his description of the yellow salon and of FÉLICITÉ, the ambitious mother and unscrupulous wife who manages her

unconscious husband, and impels him in whatever path she chooses, he all the time supposing himself to be entirely independent.

To the occasional touches of ghastly realism we are prepared to hear objections—which will come mainly from the larger class who read only for amusement. No one can deny, however, that our artist has painted his pictures in colors which can never fade.

Truth alone in the eyes of Monsieur Zola is great—and real Art is Truth. He is quite as bold as Homer in his delineations—who also disguised nothing, and showed the human heart in all its nakedness, but represented broad generalities rather than individual peculiarities. Zola, however, has an absolute passion for analysis by which all his works are characterized, and which adds unquestionably to their vigor and interest.

He depicts people as he sees them, but not through jaundiced eyes; his characters are not wholly good nor wholly bad; he sets down their passions and their weaknesses, their petty jealousies, and small rivalries; his heart is as tender as

his pen is forcible, while his love of Nature is apparent in every chapter he writes; his descriptions of scenery and flowers are as minute as his dissection of the human heart, and could only have been written by a man who felt every word he penned.

Each reader must judge of Zola from his own point of view, and to enable him to do this justly he should begin with "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY," OR, "LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON," and follow the author through the seven succeeding volumes.

No reader, however careless, can peruse unmoved, the pathetic story of Silvère and Miette, which is as absolutely tender and touching as anything known in modern fiction. Their innocent love and the terrible tragedy by which it is crowned; the vivid description of the Coup d'État in the Provinces, where the cause of Liberty struggled for two weeks instead of dying as in Paris at the end of forty-eight hours, form a series of dramatic pictures which the Translator commends to his readers with the conviction that they, on taking up the book, will not lay it down until finished.

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THE
ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY.
(LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON.)

FROM THE FRENCH OF
ÉMILE ZOLA.
AUTHOR OF "L'ASSOMMOIR," "HELENE; OR, UNE PAGE D'AMOUR," "THE ABBE'S
TEMPTATION; OR, LA FAUTE DE L'ABBE MOURET."

TRANSLATED BY JOHN STIRLING.

CHAPTER I.

THE GODDESS OF LIBERTY.

LEAVING Plassans by the Roman gate on the south of the town, after passing the scattered houses of the Faubourg, one finds one's self on the road to Nice, and on the right a vacant space, known by the people under the name of Saint-Mittre.

Saint-Mittre is an elongated square, separated from the highway merely by a strip of worn turf. On one side is a lane which terminates in a cul-de-sac, and is bordered by a row of dilapidated huts. At the left and rear it is shut in by two moss-grown walls, over which wave branches of the tall mulberry trees on the great estate of Jas-Meiffren, which has its entrance lower down in the Faubourg.

Thus shut in on three sides, Saint-Mittre is like a square which leads nowhere, and which is only crossed by pedestrians.

Formerly this spot was a Cemetery under the protection of Saint-Mittre—a Provençal Saint much honored in the country about. The old inhabitants of Plassans, in 1851, talked of having seen the walls of this Cemetery standing for years. For a century this spot had been used for interments, until finally the authorities of the town were compelled to open a new Cemetery on the other side of the town, so full had this one become, and Saint-Mittre was abandoned and overgrown with crisp dark grass and weeds. The soil—which could never be upheaved by shovel or pickaxe without bringing to the surface some human remains—was appallingly fertile.

From the highway, after May rains and June suns, the herbage was seen overtopping the walls; while within it was like a sea of dark green with dashes of strangely brilliant flowers, while the damp earth smelled of the decaying humanity which nourished this rank vegetation. One of the curiosities of this old burial-ground was a huge pear tree with gnarled and twisted branches, laden yearly with enormous fruit which no housewife in Plassans would touch.

Everybody spoke of this gigantic fruit with disgust, except the school-boys of the Faubourg, who were troubled with no such scruples of delicacy, and climbed the walls at twilight to steal these pears long before they were ripe.

The glowing life of these trees and this herbage had long since devoured all the dead bodies in the old Cemetery of Saint-Mittre ; and now as one passed along by the wall, only the penetrating odor of the wall-flowers was to be perceived, and this had been the case for several summers. About this time the town awoke to the fact that this property was lying idle, and they wished to utilize it. They tore down the walls, rooted up the grass, and cut down the pear trees. Then they proceeded to move the Cemetery. The bones they dug up were heaped in one corner, and for a month the children alternately grieved over the loss of their pear tree, and played ball with skulls, and some of the older lads went so far as to be guilty of the very poor jest, of one night hanging tibias and femurs on all the door-bells in the town. There was a constant repetition of this scandal, of which Plassans still preserved the tradition, until the bones were thrown all together, in a great ditch in the new Cemetery.

But in the provinces such labors are executed with strange slowness, and the inhabitants for many days were regaled with the sight of a huge cart, transporting human remains as if they had been loads of plaster.

This cart traversed the length of Plassans, and the wretched cobble-stones of the streets jostled out bits of bone and handfuls of rich earth all along the road. Not the smallest religious ceremony took place. It was merely a slow and brutal cartage through an insensible town.

For many years this ancient Cemetery was looked upon with horror. Open to all comers on the side of a great

highway, it was soon again overgrown with wild flowers and grass. The town had expected to sell it and to see houses erected upon it, but they found themselves mistaken—the remembrance of the carts laden with human bones weighed like a nightmare on the people; or it may have been simply the indolence of the provincials, and the reluctance they always feel in undertaking new enterprises. At all events, the town kept the land, and, after a time, seemed to lose the desire to sell it.

The authorities did not even fence it in. Any one entered it who pleased, and by degrees all the inhabitants of Plassans became accustomed to this empty corner—wore narrow paths across it, and sat on the grassy banks. When the paths were well defined, and the beaten earth was gray and hard, the old cemetery looked like a public square badly cared for and neglected.

For more than thirty years Saint-Mittre has had a most peculiar appearance. The town, too indifferent and sleepy, finally let the land for an absurdly small rental as a lumber yard. At this very day huge beams lie here and there on the ground like broken columns, and are a perpetual joy to the children, who clamber over them with unwearying activity, and play there the livelong day; mirthful shouts are varied by shrieks of pain, as they fall from the planks where they sit in rows balancing themselves by the hour together.

Thus for a quarter of a century has Saint-Mittre been the playground of all the children in the vicinity.

Another thing which gives to this spot a character of its

own is—that all birds of passage—all wandering Bohemians—establish themselves there. As soon as one of those mansions on wheels, containing an entire tribe, reaches Plassans, they settle themselves on the area of ground known as Saint-Mittre.

The place is rarely empty: there is always some band of wild, fantastic-looking people—tawny men, withered women, and beautiful children, living a strange out-of-door life—boiling their pots in the open air, eating nameless things, washing and drying their ragged garments, sleeping, quarrelling and fighting—dirty and poor.

The old burial-ground, where once the bees buzzed around the gaudy flowers in the glaring sunlight, has thus become a noisy spot, resounding with the sharp voices of children and the quarrels of the wandering Bohemians.

A saw-mill of primitive construction in a sheltered corner served as bass to the sharper tones, and for hours two men worked it with the regularity of machines. The wood they cut was piled against the rear wall in the most methodical manner.

The old mill-stones lying there from season to season, eaten with rust, and half overgrown with weeds, were an especial charm of Saint-Mittre. They indicated mysterious paths, narrow and discreet, which led to a wider alley close under the wall, draped with moss, while under-foot the ground looked as if covered with a green carpet—around which something of the rank vegetation and chilly silence of the old Cemetery still lingered.

From the old tombs, warmed by the hot suns, rose

damp odors, and in all the country about Plassans there was not a place, so quiet, so peaceful, and so solitary.

When the Cemetery was emptied, the bones must have been piled up in this corner; for it is by no means rare even now, as one walks through the damp grass, to discover part of a human skull.

No one nowadays thinks of the dead who have slept under this turf. Only children find their way to this especial spot when they are playing hide-and-go-seek; to all others the green alley is an unknown territory.

In the afternoon, when the sun is warm—while the children are playing noisily among the wood—and the Bohemians are lighting the fire under the kettle, the saw-mill rises clear against the sky, keeping up its regular movements as if it were the pendulum which regulated all the busy life which has invaded this ancient place of eternal rest.

It was only the old people, seated on the beams, basking in the setting sun, who talked among themselves of the bones they had formerly seen carted through the streets of Plassans.

When night fell, Saint-Mittre was emptied and looked like a great black hole, except that at the very back was the dying light of the fire kindled by the Bohemians, past which an occasional shadow silently flitted. In winter especially, the place assumed a most sinister aspect.

One Sunday evening about seven o'clock, a young man passed, entered Saint-Mittre, keeping close to the wall, and emerged near the saw-mill. It was early in December,

1851, and excessively cold. The moon was at the full, and had the excessive brilliancy peculiar to winter; the saw-mill lay silent and motionless, flooded in this white light.

The young man stood still for a few moments, and looked about him doubtfully. He held, half-hidden by his overcoat, a musket, whose muzzle, turned toward the ground, glittered in the rays of the moon. He pressed the musket close to his breast, while he intently examined one after the other the black shadows projected by the piles of timber. They were almost like a checker-board in their regularity.

In the centre, on a bit of bare and level ground, stood the saw-mill, like some monstrous geometrical figure roughly drawn with ink on paper. The beams and logs in this wintry moon—in this frozen stillness—had more than a vague suggestion of the dead in the old Cemetery.

The young man looked about him. Not a human being was to be seen. The solitude appeared absolute. Several dark shadows in the distance disturbed him, however; but after another investigation he hastily crossed the lumber yard and reached the alley running along the wall. There his feet made no sound as they trod the frozen grass. He seemed more at ease, and no longer appeared to fear any danger. He ceased to conceal his musket. The moon shining between piles of boards lay in strips of light at his feet. All—light and shadow alike—was buried in profound slumber—sweet and sad.

Nothing could be imagined more peaceful than this path. The young man traversed its whole length. At the extreme end, where the walls of Jas-Meiffren make an

angle, he stood still and listened, as if for some sound from the next grounds.

Then hearing nothing he stooped, thrust aside a board, and hid his gun amid the pile of timber. In this corner an old tomb that had been forgotten in the days when the Cemetery had been moved made a comfortable seat. Rain had worn away the edges, and moss and lichens were slowly invading it; but in the moonlight the remains of an epitaph engraven on the face of the tomb were to be seen—

“Cy—gist—Marie—morte—”

Time had effaced all else.

When he had concealed his gun, the young man, listening again and still hearing nothing, stepped up on the tomb. The wall was low and he stood leaning upon it; beyond the row of mulberries he saw only a plain of light. The Jas-Meiffren estate, flat and treeless, extended under the moon like a huge web of unbleached linen, while a couple of hundred yards away, the house and its outbuildings lay in silent whiteness.

The young man fixed his eyes on this last with evident anxiety. The village clock struck seven slowly and solemnly. He counted each stroke, and stepped down from the stone with an air of mingled surprise and relief, and took his seat with the air of a man resigned to a long period of waiting. He did not seem to feel the cold. For a half hour he sat motionless, with eyes fixed as if dreaming. He had taken his seat in a dark corner, but as the moon rose higher it touched his head, and brought out each feature of his face.

He was not more than seventeen, and wonderfully handsome, of vigorous build, with an expressive mouth, and the delicate skin and coloring of his years. His face was thin and long, and chiselled as by some powerful sculptor. The high forehead, the arch of the eyebrows, the aquiline nose, the well-moulded chin, gave to the whole head a singular vigor, which as years went on might become too pronounced; but at this hour of puberty the sharpness of outline was softened by the down on cheek and chin, and by a vague childishness of expression. The eyes were velvety black, and very gentle in expression, imparting sweetness to this energetic physiognomy. All women might not be attracted by this youth, for he was far from what is usually called a handsome fellow; but his face was so full of energy, so sympathetic and strong, that the girls of his Province—those warm-blooded Southern girls—dreamed of him whenever they had seen him pass their door on July evenings.

He sat, musing, on the tombstone, unheeding the moonlight now shining full upon him. He was of medium height, and somewhat squarely built. His arms were muscular, and his hands were those of a working-man already hardened by labor. His feet, encased in stout leather shoes, looked large and strong. All these members, and even his listless manner of sitting, indicated that he belonged to the people; but the carriage of his head, the flash in his eyes, told a clever observer that he revolted against the stultifying manual labor which was already beginning to round his shoulders. His mind was quick and

intelligent, but weighed down by his race and his class; one of those exquisitely tender natures that suffer, in not being able to cast aside their outer husk. Thus, in spite of his real strength of character, he seemed timid and uneasy—ashamed of his own incompleteness, but not knowing in what way to finish himself, if we may be allowed the expression.

He was a brave fellow—ignorant and enthusiastic—a manly heart guided by boyish reasoning abilities—self-sacrificing as a woman, and courageous as a hero.

He was dressed in pantaloons and jacket of ribbed velveteen. A soft felt hat, pulled down a little in front, threw a light shadow over his brow.

When the half-hour struck from the neighboring clock he started. Discovering that he was bathed in the full light of the moon, he looked anxiously about him, and with a sudden movement retreated into the shadow; but his train of thought was hopelessly lost; he realized that his feet and hands were like ice, and became impatient. Again he stood upon the tombstone and scrutinized the Jas-Meiffren estate, where all was silent and vacant. Then not knowing what to do to kill time, he descended, took up his gun once more from amid the pile of boards where he had concealed it, and amused himself with that.

This gun was a long and heavy carabine, which had doubtless belonged to some smuggler. By the thickness of the butt end, and the dimensions of the barrel, it was easy to see that it had once carried stones, and had since been altered by some country blacksmith.

The youth ran his hand up and down his gun caressingly, put his finger into the barrel and examined it carefully; by degrees becoming fired with youthful enthusiasm, in which there was a touch of childishness, he shouldered his gun and stood like a newly enlisted conscript going through his first drill.

The clock was on the stroke of eight. He stood thus for several minutes, when all at once a voice, soft and low as a sigh, came from Jas-Meiffren—

“Are you there, Silvère?” asked the voice.

Silvère dropped his gun, and leaped once more upon the flat tomb.

“Yes,” he replied, in a voice that was equally low. “Wait a moment; I will help you.”

A young girl’s head appeared above the wall. The child, with singular agility, had climbed like a cat into the trunk of a mulberry tree. By the rapidity and ease of her movements it was easy to see that this strange path was not new to her.

In the twinkling of an eye she was seated on the edge of the wall. Then Silvère lifted her in his arms, and placed her on the turf; but she resisted—

“Let me be!” she said, with the air of a child playing some romping game; “let me be! I can get down perfectly well by myself.”

Then, when she stood fairly on her feet, she continued: “You have been waiting for me a long time, have you not? I ran so fast that I am entirely out of breath.”

Silvère did not reply; he seemed in no laughing mood.

He took his seat by her side, saying gravely: "I wanted to see you, Miette, and would have waited all night for you. I leave to-morrow morning at daybreak."

Miette saw the gun lying on the frozen grass. She, in her turn, grew very grave, and murmured: "Ah! you have decided then; and there is your gun."

Then came a long silence.

"Yes," answered Silvère, in a trembling voice; "that's my gun. I preferred to leave the house to-night. To-morrow morning Aunt Dide might have seen me take it, and that would have worried her. I intend to hide it somewhere here, and come for it just as we start."

As Miette seemed unable to take her eyes from this gun which he had so foolishly left full in sight, he took it up, and slipped it again among the boards.

"We learned this morning," he said, as he seated himself again, "that the insurgents of La Palud and of Saint-Martin-de-Vaulx were on the march, and that they spent last night at Amboise. It has been decided that we shall join them there. This afternoon a band of workmen from Plassans left the town; to-morrow all the others will go to join their brothers."

He uttered this word "brothers" with boyish emphasis. Then, with increasing animation, he continued:

"The conflict is inevitable; but Right is on our side, and we shall triumph."

Miette listened to Silvère, looking before her with wide-opened, unseeing eyes. When he ceased speaking, she said slowly:

"It is well."

And at the end of a moment she added:

"You told me so; but I hoped—I could not but hope. But now it is decided."

They could say no more. This quiet spot breathed the most intense melancholy. The only moving things were the shadows thrown by the swaying branches of the mulberry trees over the moonlight which flooded the grass. The group formed by the two young persons on the tombstone was as if sculptured from marble.

Silvère has slipped his arm around Miette's waist, and she leaned against his shoulder. They exchanged no kisses. She gently submitted to his brotherly embrace.

Miette was wrapped in an ample brown cloak with a hood. This garment fell to her feet, and enveloped her entirely, so that only her head and hands emerged.

The women of the people—peasants and work-women—still wear in Provence these large mantles, which they call pelisses, and the fashion of which dates from time immemorial.

Miette had thrown her hood back. She lived out of doors, and never wore a hat or cap. Her well-shaped head stood out against the wall, whitened by the moon. She was a child, but a child who was soon to become a woman. She was just at that charming hour of indecision when the frolicsome child is transformed into the girl.

At that time there is always with all adolescents the delicacy of an opening bud—the full, voluptuous lines of womanhood are indicated in the slender, childish form.

Some girls at this period develop too hastily; they grow tall and thin, like weeds or unhealthy plants.

But for Miette—for all those who are rich in blood and who live an out-of-door life—it is an hour of grace and sweetness which is never theirs again. Miette was thirteen, and though tall and well grown, no one would have thought her older, so radiant was her face with childish gayety.

Thanks to the climate and to the healthy life she led she was rapidly becoming a woman. She was almost as tall as Silvère, and like him would not have been called beautiful by the majority of people. No one could have thought her ugly; but she was odd in her appearance, and totally unlike most young girls.

Her black hair was superb, growing in heavy masses over her brow, and falling in rippling waves upon her shoulders. It was so thick that she did not know what to do with it. She twisted it in several coils, each as large as a child's arm, and massed these coils at the back of her head.

She had little time to think of her coiffure, and it often happened that this enormous chignon, hastily made without a mirror, had a certain classic grace.

Seeing her with this mass of hair, and the short curls on her forehead and on her neck, it was easy to see why she always went bareheaded—unheeding rain and cold.

Her low forehead, her large, somewhat prominent eyes, her short nose, with wide, expanded nostrils, the somewhat full but scarlet lips, might have seemed defects taken

one by one. But in the pretty round face, each detail formed an ensemble of remarkable beauty. When Miette laughed, throwing her head back, and leaning a little toward the right, she resembled an antique Bacchante, with her firm, full throat, her cheeks rounded like a child's, her beautiful white teeth and her massive hair, while her face, bronzed by the sun, had on certain days and in certain lights, almost a soft amber tint.

A fine black down gave a light shadow to her upper lip. Manual toil had begun to deform her little hands, which would have been, had they remained idle, adorable and dimpled.

Miette and Silvère sat for a long time in silence. They contemplated the unknown Future, and in their fear and dread of the morrow, they pressed closer to each other. Both fully realized the uselessness and cruelty of any audible complaint, but the girl was the first to speak, and in one phrase revealed their mutual and paramount anxiety.

"You will come back?" she murmured, with her arms around Silvère's neck.

Silvère, not daring to reply lest he should weep with her, kissed her on her cheek in a brotherly sort of way. They then relapsed into silence.

Miette shivered. She was no longer leaning against Silvère's shoulders, and felt excessively cold—colder than ever before in this deserted spot, where she and her friend had spent so many peaceful hours.

"I am cold," she said, drawing up the hood of her pelisse.

"Shall we walk?" asked the young man. "It is not yet nine o'clock."

Miette remembered, with a pang, that this was the last of the evenings for which she lived through long weary days.

"Yes; let us walk," she replied. "Let us go as far as the mill; I can stay with you to-night as long as you choose."

They left their seat, and stood in the shadow of a pile of boards. Miette opened her pelisse, which was quilted in small squares, and lined with scarlet cotton, and threw one end of this full warm mantle over Silvère's shoulders, wrapping him as well as herself in the same garment. They each passed an arm around the other. When they were thus confounded, as it were, and had drawn the pelisse around them so that they were one shapeless mass, they began to walk slowly toward the road, no longer afraid of being recognized in the clear moonlight. Miette had wrapped Silvère in her cloak, and he had submitted to her doing so—in a matter-of-course way as if the pelisse had often before rendered them the same service.

The road from Nice, on the two sides of which extended the Faubourg, was bordered in 1851 with century-old elms—huge giants, half decayed, but too full of vigor to be then replaced, as was the case by the city authorities not long since—by small plane trees.

When Silvère and Miette reached these trees—the shadow of whose monstrous branches was thrown all along the sidewalk—they met several black figures moving

silently in the shadow of the houses. These were lovers wrapped in one mantle like themselves.

This fashion of walking is peculiar to these towns in the South. The young men and girls, belonging to the people—those who intend to marry each other some day—and who wish to see each other, and exchange a few kisses previously, are often at a loss how to do so. Were they to meet in a room they would soon be the talk of the town. Nor have they time in the evening to fly to the solitude of the country.

They have, therefore, adopted a third plan—they wander through the Faubourg, the vacant lots, the winding lanes—all the places where there are few people to be met; and as all the inhabitants know them, it is considered advisable to make themselves unrecognizable, and so wear those huge mantles which will shelter an entire family. Parents make no objection to these walks; the rigid morals of the Provinces do not seem to be alarmed by them, for it is distinctly understood that the lovers never seat themselves, nor linger in any of the corners.

Nothing can be more charming than these lovers' walks, nor more characteristic of the South. They are absolute masquerades full of expedients within the reach of the poorest. The girl has but to open her mantle, which is an ever-ready asylum and concealment for her lover. She hides him next her heart, as the little bourgeoisie hides her gallant under her bed or in her wardrobe. Forbidden fruit has here an especially delicious flavor: it

is eaten in the open air amid indifferent spectators. The certainty of being able to embrace each other with impunity before the world, to spend whole evenings in each other's arms without any risk of being recognized, or of having the finger of scorn pointed at them, is especially precious. One couple is a brown mass precisely like the next, without the smallest individuality. To the belated passer-by who catches a fleeting glimpse of these moving shadows, it is simply Love that passes—nothing more. Love without a name! Love that one guesses at, rather than sees.

The lovers feel themselves, as it were, at home. They talk in lowered voices, and oftener walk for hours in silence, happy in being wrapped in the same folds of cloth.

This is at once voluptuous and innocent. The climate is the only guilty party, for it invites lovers to an out-of-door life. On lovely summer evenings no one can walk through Plassans without discovering in each sequestered alley or sheltered corner a hooded couple. Certain places, Saint-Mittre especially, are peopled with dark dominos, loitering slowly along in the sweet dewy silence. They are like the guests of some mysterious ball given by the stars. When it is too warm for pelisses, the girls turn their upper skirts over their heads, while in winter they laugh at frosts and chills. And Miette and Silvère walked on the road to Nice without remembering that it was December.

The young people crossed the sleeping Faubourg

without exchanging a word. They were absorbed in the charm of their proximity to each other. Their hearts were very heavy, for their parting was near at hand, and the present moments were at once bitter and sweet.

Very soon the houses became more scattered; they had reached the end of the Faubourg, on which opened the avenue of Jas-Meiffren, protected by a huge gate, between the bars of which could be seen a long row of mulberry trees.

As they passed, Silvère and Miette involuntarily glanced within.

After leaving Jas-Meiffren, the highway descends gently to the valley, which serves as a bed for a little river—the Viorne—which is a brook in summer and a torrent in winter. The two rows of old elms were in existence at this time, and made a superb avenue, both sides of which were planted with wheat and grape vines.

On this December night, the land, freshly turned over, lay gray and dark in the moonlight, while the rush of the Viorne was all the sound that disturbed the great peace of the country.

Miette's thoughts returned to Jas-Meiffren, which they had just passed.

"I had great difficulty in making my escape to-night," she said. "My uncle was shut up in his cellar, where I think he was burying his silver, for he seemed terribly frightened this morning at what he heard."

Silvère held the girl with a firmer grasp.

"Keep up your courage," he said; "the day will come when we can see each other at all times and seasons."

"Ah!" murmured the girl, sadly, "you are more courageous than I. Some days I am very sad. It is not that I am dismayed by the hard work that is imposed upon me. On the contrary, I am sometimes glad that my uncle is so stern. He was right to bring me up as a peasant girl. Sometimes I believe myself to be accursed, and then I wish I were dead. I think of—you know what I think of."

The child's voice broke here, and she sobbed convulsively. Silvère interrupted her hastily—almost harshly.

"Hush!" he said, "you promised never to think of that. It was not your crime."

Then he added in a gentler tone: "We love each other, do we not? When we are married you will never be unhappy again."

"I know," murmured Miette, "that you are good, and that you will help me. But I am afraid, and at times even rebellious. It seems to me that a great wrong has been committed toward myself, and then I feel wicked. I can speak openly and frankly to you. Each time that my father's name is uttered, I feel myself grow hot all over. When I pass the children in the street, and they call out after me, 'There goes the Chantegreil!' I am furious, and would like to beat them."

She relapsed into gloomy silence, which she broke with these words:

"You are a man—you own a gun and can use it! You ought to be very thankful."

Silvère allowed her to speak without interruption, and then said, in a sad voice:

"You are wrong, Miette; your anger is unworthy of you. You should not rebel against justice. I am going to fight, it is true, but I have no private vengeance to gratify."

"No matter," continued the young girl, "I wish I were a man and could use a gun. It seems to me that it would do me good."

And as Silvère did not speak, she realized that she had displeased him. Her excitement abated. She stammered in a pleading voice:

"It is your departure which disturbs me and puts these ideas into my head. I know you are right—I know I should be humble—"

And she began to weep. Silvère took her hands tenderly in his.

"You fly from anger to tears just like a child. Be reasonable; I am not scolding you. I only wish to see you happier, and that depends entirely on yourself."

The tragedy whose memory had been so sadly evoked by Miette saddened the lovers for some minutes. They continued to walk with lowered heads, absorbed in thought. At the end of a moment Silvère said;

"Do you think I am any happier than yourself? If my grandmother had not brought me up, what would have become of me? With the exception of Uncle Antoine, who is a working man like myself, and from whom I have learned to love the Republic, all my other relatives act as if I were a disgrace to them, and look away when I pass them."

He became excited as he spoke; he stood still in the middle of the highway.

"God is my witness," he continued, "that I neither envy nor hate a human being. But, if we triumph, it may come to pass that I shall have some truths to tell to these fine gentlemen. Uncle Antoine knows all. You will see when we return. We will then live free and happy!"

Miette drew him gently on. They resumed their walk.

"You love your Republic very dearly," said the child, with a pitiful effort at a jest; "do you love me as much?"

She laughed, but with some little bitterness. Perhaps she thought that Silvère found it too easy to leave her.

The youth replied, gravely:

"You are my wife. I have given you my whole heart. I love the Republic—you see—because I love you. When we are married it will bring us much happiness, and it is to secure this happiness that I am going away to-morrow. You do not advise me to stay at home, do you?"

"By no means," answered the girl, eagerly; "a man should be courageous—courage is a splendid thing. Forgive me for being jealous. Would that I were as strong as you; you would love me more then, I am sure!"

She was silent for a moment, and then added, with artless innocence:

"Ah! how gladly—how eagerly will I embrace you when you return!"

These words touched Silvère profoundly. He took Miette in his arms and kissed her cheek. The girl struggled a little, with a faint laugh, but tears were in her

eyes. The country was spread before them, cold and cheerless. On the left, upon a slight elevation, stood the ruins of a wind-mill. This was the point which the young people had fixed on as the limits of their walk. They had moved on, with hardly a glance to the right or the left. But when Silvère had kissed Miette, he looked around and saw the wind-mill.

"I had no idea we had come so far," he said. "It must be half-past nine; we must return."

Miette made a wry face.

"Let us go a little further," she urged. "Only a few steps. Come—"

Silvère put his arm around her waist with a smile, and they moved slowly on. They no longer feared observation, for, since passing the last houses, they had not met a living soul; nevertheless, they were still enveloped in the pelisse. This pelisse seemed their natural nest—it had sheltered and hidden them for so many happy evenings. The soft folds reassured them, and narrowed the horizon at which they looked, relieving them from that sensation of isolation which weighs down human nature so often when a wide extent of field and sky is seen.

It seemed to them that they carried their house with them, enjoying the landscape as through a window.

They ceased to talk; they held each other's hands, and uttered an occasional exclamation. Silvère forgot his Republican enthusiasm. Miette thought of nothing except that her lover was to leave her in an hour, for a long time—perhaps forever. They still moved on, and reached the

little path which led from the highway to a village on the banks of the Viorne. They did not stop, although this was the spot where they had determined to turn back. They pretended not to see this path, and it was several minutes before Silvère said :

“It is late, and you must be very tired.”

“No, I am not tired. I could walk leagues with you in this way,” answered the girl; and then, in a coaxing voice, she added : “Can we not go down to Sainte-Claire? Then we will certainly turn.”

Silvère, lulled by their measured pace, slept with his eyes open, and made no objection. They walked on at a slower pace than before, putting off the evil moment when they must turn their faces homeward; for this was the signal of their cruel separation. The slope of the road was very gradual. The valley is an extent of meadow land, running to the Viorne along low hills. These meadows, divided by hedges from the highway, are called the Sainte-Claire meadows.

“We will go as far as the bridge,” now said Silvère, in his turn.

Miette laughed gayly, and threw her arms around her lover's neck with a hearty kiss.

The long avenue of trees led just where the hedge begins, and two enormous elms stood a little apart from the others. From this point to the bridge was less than four hundred yards, but the lovers took more than fifteen minutes to walk this distance. In spite, however, of all their tardy movements, the bridge was reached at last. There they stopped.

Before them, the road to Nice wound up the hill, but they soon lost it as it made a sharp turn between two wooded slopes. The road by which they had just come looked like a long ribbon of silver, while the upheaved land on the sides was gray in the moonlight. Lights yet shone from some of the windows of the houses in the Faubourg. Miette and Silvère had walked a good league.

They looked down as they leaned over the bridge. The Viorne, swollen by the recent rains, ran swiftly past with a dull, continuous roar. Up and down the banks they could see the black lines of trees. Here and there a ripple caught the moonlight, and looked like the glittering scales of some monstrous fish.

The young lovers knew this place well, for on warm July evenings they had often come there in search of cool breezes, and had spent hour after hour among the willows on the left bank. They remembered every turn, and every stone on which they crossed the Viorne, which, at midsummer, was as slender as a thread.

Miette looked longingly toward the opposite shore. "If it were only warmer," she said, "we could rest there a while."

Then, with her eyes still fixed on the place she had learned to love so well, she added: "Do you see that dark spot, Silvère? That is the place where we sat on last Corpus Christi."

"Yes; I remember," answered Silvère, in a low voice.

It was there he first ventured to kiss her on her cheek, and this remembrance awakened by the young girl, gave them both pain and pleasure.

They saw, as by a flash of lightning, the happy evenings they had spent together, and more especially the one of Corpus Christi, of which they recalled the smallest details—the soft air, the cool freshness of the willows on the banks of the Viorne, the very words they had uttered to each other.

And even as they dwell on the Past, they thought of the unknown Future; they saw themselves walking side by side through life as they had walked on the highway—wrapped in the folds of the same pelisse.

Then, eyes looking into eyes, they smiled.

Suddenly Silvère lifted his head, and throwing back the pelisse he listened intently. Miette, much surprised, imitated him, without understanding why he drew away from her with so decided a gesture.

They heard a confused noise among the hills amid which wound the road to Nice. It was like the rattle of many wheels and wagons. The roar of the river drowned this noise for a time. But it soon grew more distinct, and the heavy tread of a body of troops was distinguished, and then a strange and measured sound, which it was almost impossible to define, smothered as it was by the hills. Suddenly a black mass emerged from among them, and the Marseillaise burst forth, sung with inconceivable and formidable fury.

“It is they!” cried Silvère, enthusiastically.

He began to run, dragging Miette with him, until he reached a slight eminence crowned by a clump of young oaks, upon which the two climbed, that they might not be swept away by the advancing crowd.

The young girl, when they were safe in this spot, looked sadly down on these men, whose distant voices had been enough to tear her lover from her arms. It seemed to her as if the whole body of troops was now between her and him. They were so happy only a few moments before—so closely united—so alone in the soft moonlight; and now Silvère did not even seem to know that she was there, and had eyes only for these unknown, whom he called brothers.

The band swept on. Nothing could be imagined more superb than this irruption of this mass of men on the dead and frozen peace of the scene. The highway was a living, rolling torrent, that seemed exhaustless, and the air was full of the voices of this human tempest. When the last battalions appeared, the Marseillaise filled the sky and echoed through the valley. The whole country shivered, as it were, and repeated the notes of the National hymn. The very trees and bushes joined in the chorus, and the wide valley seemed peopled with invisible crowds who joined in the chorus of the insurgents—all along the Viorne, in every mysterious shadow, hidden voices caught up the refrain with indignant anger. The whole country clamored for Vengeance and Liberty!

While the little army descended the hill side, they continued to sing until the very stones under their feet reverberated.

Silvère, pale with emotion, listened and looked.

“I thought,” murmured Miette, “that they would not go through Plassans.”

“The plan has been changed,” answered Silvère. “We

were to have marched by the Toulon road, leaving Plasans and Orchères on the left. They left Alboise this afternoon, and must have passed Tulettes in the evening."

The head of the column had by this time reached the young people, and the small army was characterized by more order than one would expect in a band of undisciplined men. The quotas from each town formed distinct battalions, and must have numbered all together some three thousand men.

As they defiled past Miette, she instinctively drew closer to Silvère and leaned her head against his shoulder. Her face, framed by the hood of her pelisse, was very pale, and her eyes were fixed on this rapidly moving crowd and on the strange faces transfigured by enthusiasm, whose wide open mouths were filled with the avenging cry of the Marseillaise.

Silvère, feeling her tremble at his side, leaned over her and whispered in her ear the names of the various contingents as they presented themselves.

The column marched in lines of eight. In front came tall fellows with square heads, who looked as strong as Hercules. The Republic had in them blind and intrepid advocates. They carried over their shoulders huge axes freshly sharpened, whose steel glittered in the moonlight.

"Those are the wood-cutters from the forests of La Seille," said Silvère. "They have formed themselves into a body of sappers. Upon a sign from their chiefs, these men will hew down the gates of every town between here and Paris, just as they would the old cork trees on the

mountain sides." The young man spoke proudly of the strong arms of his brothers.

Behind the wood-cutters came a band of workmen, with heavy beards browned by the sun. "The contingents from La Palud, which was the first Bourg to rise," whispered Silvère. "Those in the velvet jackets are the charcoal-burners from the mountain gorges. Those huntsmen there knew your father, Miette. They have good arms, which they know how to use. Ah! if all had as good; but the workmen you see have only clubs."

Miette did not reply. When Silvère spoke of her father, her cheeks flushed angrily, and she watched the men with a feeling of strange sympathy. From this moment she seemed feverishly excited by the words and music sung by the insurgents.

The column swept on as if blown by the mistral. To the people from Palud had succeeded more workmen in blouses, among whom many bourgeois in coats were to be seen.

"Those are the men from Saint-Martin-de-Vaulx," resumed Silvère. "That Bourg was the next to rise after La Palud. The masters joined their workmen. They are rich men, Miette—men who could live comfortably at home, and who yet risk their lives in the defence of Liberty. Look, Miette! those men who have a red scarf tied around their left arms are the chiefs.

"And here come the insurgents from Alboise and Tulettes! I see Burgat, the blacksmith. How fast they go!"

Miette leaned forward, choked with emotion. At this moment a battalion better drilled and better disciplined than the others came in sight. There was a suggestion of a uniform in their blue blouses and red scarfs around their waist. In the centre was a man on horseback, having a sabre at his side. The greater number of these soldiers had guns or old muskets, once belonging to the National Guard.

"I do not know who those are," said Silvère. "The man on horseback must be the chief of whom I have heard, and he has gathered up his men from various places."

Behind this battalion came groups of ten or twenty—all wearing the short jackets of the peasants. They brandished pitchforks and scythes as they sang; some even carried shovels. Each hamlet had sent its men.

Silvère, who knew them all, named them with feverish excitement.

"The contingents from Chavanoz," he said. "There are only a few of them, but they are strong fellows. Uncle Antoine has told me all about them. And look! there is the Curé. I heard he was a good Republican!"

"Look, Miette," he continued, in feverish haste, "Rosan! Vernoux—Corbière—Saint-Eutrope—ah! child, the whole country is with us! Look at those men. Look at their arms; they are as hard and black as iron! Here come the smugglers from Roches-Noires! More scythes and pitchforks—more men from the country! Sainte-Anne—! Castel-le-Vieux! Estourmel! Murdaran!"

His voice was strangled in his throat by emotion. His

form seemed to expand, as with eager face and nervous gesture he pointed out these people to Miette, who still clung to his neck as she leaned over the road. This mass of wild faces, these boys and old men in their strange garbs and stranger weapons, affected the girl like an impetuous mountain torrent. It seemed to her sometimes as if they no longer moved—as if they had been run over by the Marseillaise itself, by that hoarse melody with its formidable echoes. She could not distinguish the words; she heard only the continuous roar, the vibrating notes, sharp as arrows, that seemed to pierce her very flesh.

This tumult of revolt—this appeal to Conquest and Death, with its bursts of anger—its burning longing for Liberty, its marvellous mixture of massacres and enthusiasm—woke strange echoes in her heart, which swelled with the voluptuous anguish of a virgin martyr who smiles under the lash.

Miette was a mere child. She had turned pale at the approach of the multitude, and wept at its coming between her and her lover. But she was courageous and of an ardent nature, easily fired into enthusiasm. She was quite ready now to snatch a gun and follow the insurgents. Her white teeth looked longer and sharper between her red lips, suggesting the fangs and the eagerness of a young wolf.

As she heard Silvère hurriedly name the contingents, it seemed to her that they moved more rapidly with each word he uttered. She grew dizzy as she watched this crowd, swept on as it were by a tempest. She closed her eyes, and hot tears rolled down her cheeks.

Tears also stood in Silvère's eyes.

"I do not see one of the men who left Plassans this afternoon," he murmured.

He turned to find the end of the column, still in the shadow. Suddenly he cried out, with triumphant joy:

"There they are! They have the flag! The flag has been intrusted to them!"

He seemed eager to join the insurgents, but at this moment the troops stopped. Orders ran along the column. The Marseillaise died away, and only the confused murmur of the crowd was heard. Silvère understood the orders, which summoned the Plassans men to the head of the band. As each battalion drew up at the side of the road to allow the flag to pass, the young man drew Miette on.

"Come," he cried, "we must reach the other end of the bridge before they do."

They ran quickly toward a mill where there was a dam. They crossed the Viorne on boards which the millers had thrown there. They then passed through the Sainte-Claire meadows, still holding each other by the hand and running fast, without speaking a word to each other. The troops stood in a heavy mass on the highway, which Silvère and Miette finally attained through a gap in the hedge.

Notwithstanding the détour they had made, they reached this place at the same moment with the people from Plassans. Silvère exchanged a shake of the hand with some who thought he had come to join them. Miette,

whose face was hidden in her hood, was looked at with some curiosity.

"Why! It is La Chantegreil!" said a man from the Faubourg; "Rebufat's niece—Jas-Meiffren's girl!"

Silvère, in his enthusiasm, totally forgot the singularity of his sweetheart's appearance at this hour, and the certainty of the rough jokes she would be called on to endure. Miette, in great confusion, turned to her lover for aid. But, before he could open his lips, a voice was heard, and these brutal words:

"Her father is a convict—we will not have with us the daughter of a robber and an assassin."

Miette turned deadly pale.

"You are lying," she said, slowly; "if my father killed a man he never robbed any one."

And as Silvère grasped her wrist, paler and more agitated than herself, she pushed him aside.

"Let me alone!" she said, "this is my affair."

And turning toward the men, who were crowding around her, she repeated, with growing excitement,

"You lie! You lie! He never took one sou from any one. You know that perfectly well. Why do you insult him when he is not here to answer for himself?"

She threw back her head haughtily. She was superb in her anger. Her half-savage nature seemed to accept calmly the accusation of murder, but the accusation of robbery exasperated her. These men knew this very well, and this was why they said it, merely to incense her.

The man who had called her father a robber, to be sure,

merely repeated what he had heard for years, and he and his companions simply sneered at the child's violence. Silvère clenched his fist and the scene might have had a disastrous termination, if a chasseur from La Seille, who was sitting on a pile of stones at the edge of the road, had not come to the assistance of the young girl.

"The child is right," he said; "Chantegreil belonged to us—I knew him. No one ever understood the affair. But I for one believed in the truth of his declarations before the judges. The gendarme he shot was just going to bring him down, and he merely defended himself, you understand. Chantegreil was an honest man. Chantegreil never stole."

As always happens in such cases, the support of this man was sufficient to turn the scale, and Miette had plenty of defenders. Many of the workmen seemed to have known Chantegreil.

"You are right!" they cried. "He was not a robber. There are at Plassans plenty of scamps who ought to have been sent in his place. Chantegreil was our brother. Don't be troubled, little girl; it is all right."

Never before had Miette heard a kind word said of her father. He was spoken of always before her as a rascal, and now she had at last met kind souls who declared him to be an honest man. She burst into tears, and felt again the choking emotion which the Marseillaise had before aroused, and tried to thank these men. She longed to grasp their hands as if she were a man too, but a happier inspiration came to her. At her side stood the flag-bearer.

She put out her hand and touched the flag as she said, in a supplicating tone,

“Give it to me. Let me carry it.” This was her only thanks.

The simple-natured workmen understood her.

“That is it!” they cried. “Let La Chantegreil carry the flag.”

A wood-cutter remarked that she would soon be very tired if she went far.

“Oh! I am strong,” she said proudly, rolling up her sleeves as she spoke, and showing her pretty round arms, as full already as those of a woman.

And as they held the flag toward her she cried—

“Wait a moment!”

She took off her pelisse, which she put on again after turning out the red lining. Then she appeared in the moonlight draped in this full scarlet mantle, which fell from her throat to her heels.

The folds of the hood adapted themselves to her chignon almost in the shape of a Phrygian cap. She took the flag and pressed the staff to her bosom, standing erect with the folds of this sanguinary banner floating behind her. Her beautiful head with its heavy masses of hair; her large liquid eyes; her lips half parted with a smile; her expression of haughty energy—all gave her the air of a Virgin Goddess of Liberty. The insurgents burst into tumultuous applause. These Southerners, with their vivid imaginations, were carried off their feet by the sudden apparition of this girl in the scarlet drapery, holding their flag against her breast.

Shouts and cries were heard.

"Bravo, La Chantegreil! Long live La Chantegreil! She shall stay with us! She will bring us happiness!"

The order for forming into marching order was given. Miette pressed Silvère's hand, and whispered in his ear:

"You hear? I shall stay with you. Are you glad?"

Silvère returned the pressure silently. He accepted the position, and was as enthusiastic as his companions. Miette appeared to him so beautiful and so saintly. All along the road he kept his eyes upon her. She and his other mistress—the Republic—were now one and the same. He wished he had come with his gun on his shoulder.

In the meantime the insurgents moved slowly on, making as little noise as possible. The column advanced between the two rows of elms, winding like a gigantic serpent. The December night had regained its silence, and the roar of the Viorne was again heard. When they reached the first houses of the Faubourg, Silvère ran forward to seek his gun, which he had left at Saint-Mittre, and which he found peacefully reposing in the moonlight.

When he rejoined the insurgents, they were at the Roman gate.

Miette leaned toward him, and said with her childlike smile:

"It seems to me that I am in the Corpus Christi procession, and that I am carrying the Virgin's banner."

CHAPTER II.

THE THREE BROTHERS.

P^LASSANS is a town of ten thousand inhabitants. Built on a plateau which overlooks the Viorne, sheltered on the north by the last ramifications of the Alps—the Garrigue hills—the town is, as it were, situated at the bottom of a cul-de-sac.

In 1851 it had but two roads communicating with the outside world—the Nice road, which is at the east, and the road to Lyons on the west—the one being almost a continuation of the other. But since this date a railroad has been constructed which passes a little south of the town at the foot of a hill, and to-day when one leaves the Station, on the right shore of the river, one sees the first houses of Plassans with their terraced gardens. To reach these houses an up-hill walk of some fifteen minutes' duration is required.

For twenty years—owing probably to its lack of communication with other cities—this town had more entirely preserved its peculiar and aristocratic character than any other of the Provençale towns. It had then and still has a very superb Quartier, whose hotels are superb, built under Louis XIV. and Louis XV.—a dozen or more churches, Jesuit and Capuchin monasteries and a considerable number of convents. The distinction of classes is

governed by the division of Quartiers. Plassans numbers three, each of which is a Bourg in itself, having its own churches, promenades and customs.

The Quartier of the nobles, called the Quartier Saint-Marc, is a miniature Versailles, with straight streets, overgrown with grass, whose huge square mansions conceal large gardens, while others have a double row of terraces commanding a view of the Viorne.

The old Quartier—the ancient town—spreads out on the northwest its narrow and winding streets—there stands the Mayoralty, the Courts, the Market, and the police-stations. This, the most densely populated portion of Plassans—is mostly occupied by workmen and poor people. The new town forms a sort of long square on the northeast. The Bourgeoisie, those who have amassed a fortune, sou upon sou, and those who exercise a liberal profession, live there in straight lines of houses of an invariable yellow hue. Here stands also the Sous-Préfecture—an ugly building of ornamented stucco. The streets of this Quartier in 1851 were few in number, for it was then of recent construction, built since the railroad. The town is surrounded by a belt of ancient ramparts, which serve to make it only more dingy and confined. As fortifications, these ramparts are simply ridiculous—worn away, as they are, by clambering ivy and wall-flowers. They are pierced by numerous openings, of which the two most important are the Roman gate, opening on the road to Nice, and the Grand Gate, on the road to Lyons. Up to 1855 these entrances were guarded by enormous wooden

gates, opening in the middle, and strengthened by iron bars.

At eleven o'clock in summer, at ten in winter, these doors were locked; and the town—having like a timid girl seen the bolts pushed—retired, and slept calmly.

A guard, who inhabited a tiny house situated within one of the angles, had orders to open the gates for belated travellers. But he never did this without a lengthy argument, nor did he ever allow any one to enter without lighting his lantern and examining each face, and if these happened to displease him, ten to one, the unfortunate possessors were kept outside.

The population of Plassans was divided into three groups, so to speak. All the official personages were strangers, little loved, and much envied. The true inhabitants—those who were born there, and who firmly intended to live and die there—respected themselves too much not to be very exclusive.

The nobles cloister themselves hermetically. Since the fall of Charles X. they hardly go out at all, and entrench themselves in their great, silent Hotels, moving about as cautiously as if in the land of an enemy. They go nowhere and receive no one, not even among themselves. Their salons are opened only to priests. In summer they go to their Châteaux in the neighborhood. In winter they remain at their firesides, utterly weary of life. Their Quartier is as calm and quiet as a Cemetery. Doors and windows are cautiously barricaded, and the houses look like rows of convents. An occasional abbé passes down

the street, and disappears like a shadow through some half-open door.

The Bourgeoisie—retired merchants, lawyers, and notaries—all the middle-class world in fact, try to give a little animation to Plassans. They go to the fêtes given by the Prefect, and dream of others precisely like them, which they wish to give in return. They make earnest efforts for popularity, speak of the workingman as a “good fellow,” talk about the crops to the peasants, read the papers, and walk out on Sundays with their wives. These are the advanced minds of the place—the only ones who venture to laugh as they talk of the ramparts. They have even gone so far as to advise the demolition of these old walls—“relics of the dark ages,” they call them.

Most of them are thrilled with joy when they receive an indifferent bow from a Marquis or a Count. Their dream is to be received in a Salon of the Quartier Saint-Marc. They know very well that there is not a shadow of a hope that this dream will ever be realized, and this is what makes them free-thinkers; but free-thinkers who are ready to rush to the arms of the authorities for protection, at the least movement of dissatisfaction among the people.

The class which toils and vegetates in the old Quartier is not as clearly defined. The working classes are there in the majority; but there are also quite a number of petty tradespeople, and even some few merchants of importance.

Plassans is far from being a centre of commerce. There is only traffic enough there to dispose of the productions of the vicinity—oil, wine and almonds. As to mechanical

industries, there are none, except three or four tanneries in one street of the old Quartier—a manufactory of felt hats—and a soap-boiling factory exiled to a distant corner. This small commercial world lives surrounded by workmen, with whom they are united by common interests into one family. On Sundays the masters wash their hands of it all, and depart.

Once in each week in summer the three Quartiers of Plassans meet face to face. All the town go to the Cours Sauvaire on Sunday after vespers—the nobles as well as the others. But on this Boulevard, planted with a double row of trees, three distinct currents are established. For more than a century the nobility have promenaded at the southern extremity in front of the large hotels—the people have contented themselves with the northern end, where are the Cafés and tobacco shops; and all the afternoon the nobles and the working classes pace up and down, without either dreaming of infringing on the other. Separated by a few yards, they are in reality leagues apart. Even in the days of the Revolution each kept to his own path. This is the Sunday walk, which occurs as regularly as the day returns. It was in this dull atmosphere that in 1848 vegetated an obscure family whose head, Pierre Rougon, played in after days an important rôle.

Pierre Rougon was a peasant's son. The family of his mother, the Fonques, as they were named, owned, at the end of the last century, a large tract of land in the Faubourg, in the rear of the old Cemetery Saint-Mittre. This land, later on, was added to Jas-Meiffren. The Fonques

were the wealthiest market gardeners in the country, and furnished vegetables to half Plassans.

The name of the family was extinguished some years before the Revolution. One girl only remained—Adelaide, born in 1768, who became an orphan at eighteen. This child, whose father had died mad, was a tall creature, pale and thin, with timid eyes and a manner so singular that it could only be overlooked while she was a child. As she grew older she became more and more singular, and the story ran that she was as crazy as her father.

She had been her own mistress about six months, when she suddenly married a gardener named Rougon—a rough peasant from the Alps.

This Rougon, after the death of the last of the Fonques, whose servant he had been, remained in the employment of the daughter of his deceased master, and was soon promoted to the position of her husband.

This marriage was a perpetual astonishment to the people about, none of whom could understand why Adelaide preferred this dull, heavy, uncultivated fellow, who could hardly speak a word of French, to such and such young fellows—sons of rich farmers in the vicinity, who had been attentive to her for some time, and, as in the country nothing is allowed to rest without explanation, it was asserted that there was a mystery in the affair, and that the marriage had become a necessity.

But facts gave the lie to this scandal. It was a full year before Adelaide's child was born. This put her neighbors out of temper, as they were unwilling to admit that they

had been in error, and they continued to keep a vigilant eye on the Rougon household. They soon had ample food for talk. Rougon died very suddenly fifteen months after his marriage, from a sunstroke he received one day while weeding his carrots.

A year had not elapsed when the young widow was known to have a lover. In fact she made no attempt to conceal it. Several persons professed to have heard her address poor Rougon's successor in terms of endearment.

A year of widowhood only and a lover! Such a disregard of propriety was unheard of, and only to be excused on the ground of a disordered mind. Adelaide's strange choice made the affair still more conspicuous.

At the end of Saint-Mittre there resided at this time, in a house whose rear windows overlooked the Fonque estate, a man of a very bad reputation, who was called by every one "that scamp of a Macquart." This man had a way of disappearing altogether for entire weeks, then he would be seen again some fine evening with his hands in his pockets, calmly lounging about and whistling, with as much easy indifference as if he had just returned from a little stroll, and the women seated on their door-steps would say to their neighbors:

"Look at that scamp of a Macquart! He has hidden his gun among the rocks on the shore of the Viorne."

It was certain that Macquart did no business and had no income, but he eat and drank with an easy countenance; sitting alone at a table in a cabaret, he night after night would drink himself tipsy in solemn silence, and when the

doors of the establishments were closed, would depart with a firm tread and with his head held high.

“Macquart walks very straight,” people would say; “he is dead drunk.”

Generally, or when he had not been drinking, his figure was slightly bowed, as if he wished to escape the looks of curiosity which were levelled upon him.

Since the death of his father, a tanner, who had bequeathed to his son as his sole inheritance, the house in Saint-Mittre, he seemed to have neither friends nor family. The proximity of the frontiers, and the vicinity of the forests of La Seille, had made a smuggler of this singular fellow.

His appearance was far from attractive, and the people who saw him often said, “I should not like to meet him at midnight in a lonely path in the woods!”

Tall and heavily bearded, with a sharp, thin face, Macquart was the terror of the Faubourg. The women accused him of eating children, and of many other crimes. Although hardly thirty, he seemed to be fifty. Under his thick beard and long hair, which fell over his forehead like that of a poodle-dog, the glitter of his brown eyes was to be seen. They peered out with the uneasy furtive glance of a man with vagabond instincts—one who has been perverted by wine and the life of a paria. Although no one could point with certainty to any crime committed by him, there was not a robbery, not a murder in the country roundabout, that he was not the first man suspected.

And it was this ogre, this brigand, this "scamp of a Macquart," whom Adelaide had chosen! She had two children in twenty months—a boy and a girl; but of marriage there was no talk. Never had the Faubourg been so confounded. The stupefaction was so great at the idea that Macquart could find a mistress both young and beautiful, that the gossips were really very gentle in their dealings with Adelaide. "Poor thing! she must have become absolutely mad," they said. "If she had any family they would certainly shut her up."

And as the true history of this strange affair was buried in obscurity, it was "this scamp of a Macquart" who was accused of taking advantage of Adelaide's feeble intellect to rob her of both honor and fortune.

The legitimate son, Pierre Rougon, grew up with the other children, "the young whelps," as they were called by the gossips. Adelaide treated them all three with equal kindness, seeming to recognize no difference between Ursule and Antoine, the children of Macquart, and her husband's. She did not appear to understand that these poor creatures had a different position from her elder son. They were all her children, and that was enough for her. She would take them out walking, holding Pierre by one hand and Antoine by the other, unconscious of the very different manner in which the two children were regarded.

It was a most singular household. For twenty years children and mother lived in their own way, acknowledging no law except their own whims. Adelaide was still

the childish creature whom half the persons who knew her, believed to be mad—not that she was so, but there was a certain lack of equilibrium between the blood and the nerves—a certain derangement of brain and of heart which made her very different from other people.

She was very natural—very logical with herself; only her logic became pure lunacy in her neighbors' eyes. She seemed perfectly willing to be conspicuous in all ways, and made not the smallest attempt to stand against temptation.

For some time she had been subject to nervous attacks, which at times threw her into violent convulsions. These recurred every two or three months. The physicians when consulted replied they could do nothing; that age would calm this excitement. They put her on a simple diet, and gave her tonics. These repeated attacks unsettled her mind still further. She lived the life of a child or of an animal, guided only by her instincts. When Macquart was away, she passed her days in dreamy indolence, occupying herself with her children, only to the extent of caressing and playing with them. As soon as her lover was at home again, she would disappear. Behind the Macquart house there was a little court divided by a wall from the Fonque estate. One morning the neighbors were surprised to see this wall pierced by a door which was not there the night before. Within an hour the entire Faubourg had passed by and examined the place. The lovers must have worked all night to arrange this door, which would in future allow them to pass easily

to and fro. All the old gossip was again renewed, and Adelaide was spoken of less charitably. She was openly denounced as a disgrace to the Faubourg. This door, with its frank and brutal avowal of her life, was worse even than the existence of her two children.

"The least she can do is to have some regard for appearances," said the most tolerant of the women in the neighborhood.

But to "appearances" Adelaide paid little heed; on the contrary, she was quite proud of her door. With her own hands she had assisted Macquart in pulling the stones out of the wall. She herself had mixed the plaster to hasten the task; and when, the next day, the gossips, peering from their windows, saw her quietly contemplating the still fresh masonry, they were horrified at what they called her audacity.

So little was Adelaide seen after this, that it was supposed she had taken up her abode at the Macquart house.

The smuggler's comings and goings were very irregular, and no one ever knew just when he was in town. It was said that he had got possession of all Adelaide's money, and yet his way of living and his manner of dress had in no degree changed or improved. Perhaps Adelaide loved him all the better on account of his long absences. Perhaps he felt the need of an adventurous life, and resisted all her entreaties to remain quietly with her. A thousand fanciful fables were invented, but no adequate explanation of this *liaison* was offered. The house in

Saint-Mittre remained hermetically sealed, and kept its secret. It was surmised that Macquart beat Adelaide, merely because she sometimes appeared with a bruised face and disordered hair; but she did not seem unhappy, or even sad, nor did she show any desire to hide her bruises, but smiled and appeared very happy. This existence lasted for fifteen years.

Adelaide seemed to be utterly without practical common sense. The relative value of things, the necessity of order, seemed to escape her entirely. She allowed her children to grow up like the wild prune trees that one sees along the highway, growing up as the wind and the sun choose, bearing their natural fruit, ungrafted and untrimmed. Never had Nature been so little thwarted, never had children grown up with more liberty, or guided so entirely by their instincts. They lived in the open air, and did pretty much as they chose. They pillaged the house of all the provisions in it; they were like little wild creatures—the demons of this strange house.

When their mother disappeared for days together, the uproar became so intolerable that the neighbors threatened them with a whipping—not that Adelaide ever frightened or controlled them; but when she was there, they were less unendurable to others, because they took her for a victim. She never was angry with them, but lived placidly amid the tumult. It may be that the noise they made filled the vacancy in her brain.

Her indifference to her property was as great as that she showed toward her children. The Fonque estate during

all these years had become a charming as well as valuable spot. Adelaide had confided it to the care of a skilful gardener, who, cultivating it at the halves, robbed her with impudent boldness, but she suspected nothing of this.

Warned by a secret instinct, or because he saw that he was received by people in a very different way from that in which his brother and sister were greeted, Pierre, the legitimate son, lorded it over the others. In all their quarrels, in spite of the fact that he was much less strong than Antoine, he always beat him.

As to Ursule, a poor, frail little creature, she was hit by both the others. The three children, in fact, up to the age of fifteen or sixteen, exchanged blows without realizing their vague hatred and without understanding why they were, so to speak, strangers.

At sixteen Antoine was a tall fellow in whom both Macquart's and Adelaide's faults showed themselves. Macquart's characteristics were dominant—his wandering habits, his tendency to intoxication, his brutal tastes. But under Adelaide's nervous influence, these vices, which in the father were frankly apparent, were in the son concealed in a cowardly, treacherous sort of way. Antoine was like his mother in his absolute indifference to all but his personal comfort. He was indolent to a degree. The people about said of him:

“What a scamp! He has not even Macquart's courage! If he should ever assassinate any one, it would be with pin-pricks!”

As to physique, Antoine inherited from Adelaide only her red lips. His other features were those of the smuggler, softened down.

In Ursule the mother predominated. This child was born when Adelaide's love had outlived that of Macquart, and seemed to have received with her sex a larger proportion of her mother's nature.

Ursule, fantastic and capricious, was at times causelessly sad; then, all at once, would burst into a sudden nervous laugh. Her eyes were clear as crystal, like those of young kittens. By the side of these two children Pierre seemed like a stranger, so totally different was he from them. He was the *juste milieu* of his parents—the peasant Rougon and the nervous Adelaide. He was only a peasant, but a peasant with a less rough skin, with a brighter face and a more intelligent mind. His father and his mother were both corrected, so to speak, in him—the one by the other. Adelaide's nature, refined by the over-excitement of her nerves, had lightened the sanguine dulness of Rougon's, which in its turn prevented the development in the child of his mother's disordered fancies. Pierre knew nothing of the transports of passion nor the dreams of Macquart's children, who were badly enough brought up, to be sure, but who possessed a fund of sense which would prevent them from ever committing any irretrievable folly.

Pierre's faults were not like Antoine's, nor did he make any attempt to conceal them. In his figure, which was of medium height, in his long, pale face, where his father's

features were softened by certain suggestions of Adelaide's, a clever observer could already detect unscrupulous ambition as well as the heartlessness and envy of a peasant's son, whom the fortune and the nerves of his mother had elevated to the middle classes.

When at seventeen Pierre learned and understood the life led by his mother, and the position of Antoine and Ursule, he was neither saddened nor shocked; he was simply absorbed by the decision as to what course it would be most to his interest to take. He was the only one of the three children who felt any interest in his studies. A peasant who begins to feel the necessity of instruction often becomes a keen calculator.

It was at school that his comrades, by their sneers and the insulting fashion in which they treated his brother, gave him the first suspicions.

Later, he understood their hints rather than their words. He saw the house given over to pillage, and from that moment he regarded Antoine and Ursule as shameless parasites—as mouths which devoured his means. Of his mother he thought much, as did all the neighbors—that she ought to be shut up and prevented from wasting her money—and the youth was gradually transformed into an avaricious fellow—hardened and exasperated by the things which went on about him.

It was to him that the vegetables belonged that his mother's gardener sold to such advantage. The wine that was drunk and the bread that was eaten by Ursule and Antoine belonged in reality to him. The house and the

income were really his. In his pitiless peasant logic, he, as the only legitimate child, was the heir, and as he saw his mother's means slowly melting away, he determined to find some way of getting rid of all these people—mother, brother, sister, and servants—and of coming himself at once to the throne.

The contest was a bitter one. The young man understood that he must first strike at his mother. He carried into execution a plan whose every detail he had carefully ripened.

His tactics were to be to Adelaide a living reproach—not that he ever became angry, or addressed to her any words of bitterness in regard to her conduct—but he had a certain way of looking at her silently, which terrified her out of her senses. When she came in, after having been at Macquart's, she could not look at her son without a shiver. She felt his eyes, cold and keen as steel, piercing her through and through.

This severe, reproachful silence on the part of Pierre—the child of the husband whom she had so soon forgotten—strangely troubled her poor, sick brain. She felt as if Rougon himself had come to life again. Each week now she suffered from one of those nervous attacks which had so long troubled her, and each one left her with less strength. She wept and sobbed half the night, sometimes accepting Pierre's conduct as the blows of an avenging God; at other times she rebelled, and could hardly bring herself to believe that this stolid fellow, whose calmness added to her fever, could be her child. She would ten

thousand times rather have been beaten than looked at in this way.

Those pitiless eyes affected her finally to such a degree, that she absolutely came to the decision never to see her lover again, but as soon as Macquart arrived she forgot this determination, and rushed to see him, and again did the silent and terrible contest begin on her return. At the end of some months she belonged to her son. When with him she was like a little girl who is not quite sure that she has been good, and who feels that she is to be whipped.

Pierre, without opening his lips, had tied her, feet and hands. There had been no difficult nor compromising explanations.

When Rougon felt that his mother was his slave, he began to turn to his own interest all her peculiarities, as well as the mad terror with which a mere glance from him thrilled her.

His first care was to dismiss the gardener and replace him by a creature of his own. He assumed the entire control of the house, selling and buying, and holding the purse-strings. He made no attempt to control his mother, or to correct Antoine and Ursule's indolent habits, for he intended to rid himself of them all shortly.

Circumstances served him wonderfully. He escaped conscription as the eldest son of a widow, and two months later Antoine was drawn. This did not disturb the youth, however, as he supposed his mother would, of course, buy him off. Adelaide would, in fact, have done so, but Pierre

opposed it, as this forced departure of his brother's suited his plans only too well.

When his mother therefore murmured a word or two of entreaty, he looked at her in such a way that her lips were sealed. She abandoned Antoine in the most cowardly manner, feeling that she must pay that price for peace and liberty.

Pierre, therefore, rejoiced at being able to put his brother out of doors without a quarrel, applied himself at once to playing the part of a man at his wit's ends for money. The year had been bad, he said; he should be compelled to sell some land to buy a substitute, which would be the beginning of ruin. He gave a promise to Antoine however, that he would buy him off the next year; and Antoine departed—deceived and half pleased. Pierre got rid of Ursule in a fashion equally unexpected. A hatter in the Faubourg, named Mouret, fell in love with the girl, whom he admired for her frail delicacy, and married her for love. Ursule accepted him merely to escape from a house which she was beginning to find intolerable. Her mother was perfectly indifferent; or if she felt anything, it was pleasure, that Pierre would now have no reason for discontent, but would let her live in peace.

As soon as the young people were married, Mouret saw that he must leave Plassans, if he wished to avoid hearing disagreeable remarks made on his wife and his wife's mother. He took Ursule to Marseilles, where he established himself in business. He received no dowry with Ursule; and when Pierre—surprised at his disinterest-

edness—made some vague explanation, he closed his lips by saying that he preferred to support his wife himself. Rougon was somewhat disturbed by this peculiar conduct, which it seemed to him must conceal some snare. Adelaide still remained; Pierre had no intention of living with her. She compromised him, but he hardly knew what to do with her. To keep her with him was like tying a cannon-ball to his feet, which would prevent him from soaring to the ambitious heights of which he dreamed. To drive her away was to stigmatize himself as a bad son, which was anything but the reputation he desired. There was, therefore, but one course open for him, and that was to induce Adelaide to go of herself. To this end Pierre now turned all his energies. He held himself to be excused for all his harshness by his mother's conduct. He punished her as one punishes a child; and under this lifted rod the poor woman bowed her head. She was only forty-two, and yet she had the appearance and manner of second childhood. Her son eyed her with silent contempt, hoping that the day would come when she would flee.

The poor creature suffered horribly, and there were nights when she would have thrown herself into the Viorne: if her feeble flesh had not shrunk in chill horror from death.

She thought of flight, and dreamed of joining her lover on the frontier; but she was kept under her own roof, and endured her son's brutality, merely because she did not know where and how to go. Pierre realized this after a

time, and had decided to hire a small apartment for her, when an accident, upon which he had not dared to count, hastened the realization of his wishes. The intelligence arrived that Macquart had been killed on the frontier by a custom-house officer, just as he was coming into France with a cargo of watches from Geneva.

The tale was true. The body of the smuggler was not brought back to Plassans, but was interred in the Cemetery of a small village among the hills. Adelaide was stupefied by grief. Her son, who watched her curiously, did not see her shed a tear. Macquart had made a will and left all he had to her. She inherited the house in Saint-Mittre and the dead man's musket, which was brought to her by one of the smuggler's companions. The very next day she retired to the little house; she hung the gun over the chimney, and lived there in silence and solitude. At last Pierre Rougon was master. The Fonque estate belonged to him in reality, if not legally. He did not think, however, of establishing himself there. The field was too circumscribed for his ambition. He had no idea of spending his life watching vegetables grow. He wished to be something more than a peasant, and he longed for some of the enjoyments of life. He had planned out his future. He wished to sell his property: the amount he received would permit him to marry the daughter of some merchant, who would receive him as a partner.

The wars of the Empire had so thinned the ranks of marriageable young men, that parents were less difficult to please than they had been, and Pierre meant to pose as

a victim—as a good fellow—who suffers from the faults and vices of his family, deploring them without excusing them.

For several months he had had his eyes on an oil merchant's daughter, Félicité Puech. The firm *Puech and Lecamp* was not regarded as especially prosperous, and there were even rumors that it was on the brink of failure.

These sinister reports were precisely why Rougon turned his attention in this direction. No prosperous merchant would have given him his daughter. Pierre meant to appear before old Puech, when his affairs were at the lowest ebb, buy Félicité, and bring the house up by his intelligence and energy. This was a skilful way of climbing the social ladder. He was especially anxious to escape from the Faubourg where his family had resided, and to make others as well as herself forget the degradation of his history.

The darkest, dirtiest streets in the old Quartier seemed to him an absolute Paradise.

The auspicious moment was near at hand. The Puech and Lecamp firm was at the last gasp. The young man arranged his marriage with great skill and prudence. He was welcomed, if not as a Saviour, at least as an acceptable expedient.

Then came the question of selling his property. The owner of Jas-Meiffren, desiring to add to his estate, had already made him several offers. A low wall alone separated the two properties. Pierre speculated on his neighbor's wishes, who, being a rich man, could afford to gratify

a caprice, and purchase the land for fifteen thousand francs, which was twice its value.

Pierre, with peasant cunning, shook his head at this offer, declaring that he did not care to sell; that his mother would never consent to part with a piece of property where her ancestors had lived for nearly two centuries.

The fact was that in his heart Pierre was a little uneasy. According to his own brutal logic the land was his, and his was the right to dispose of it, and yet he had a vague fear of the law. He determined to consult an attorney, who informed him, to his great disgust, that he was absolutely powerless: his mother alone had the right to sell this property. He had feared this, but he had not feared that which he now learned, that Ursule and Antoine, his mother's illegitimate children, had also their rights in this property. Could this be possible? Could these creatures rob him—him, the child born in lawful wedlock?

The attorney's explanations were clear and precise. Adelaide had, it is true, married Rougon under the "regime of communion," but all the property consisting of real estate, the young woman, according to law, had come into its possession on the death of her husband. On the other side, Macquart and Adelaide had recognized their children, who consequently could inherit from their mother. As his only consolation, Pierre learned that the law reduced the share of the illegitimate children in favor of the legitimate. This was small consolation, since he was absolutely unwilling to share one sou with Ursule and Antoine.

These developments in regard to the law opened new horizons to the young man, who saw at once that a skilful man should always have the law on his own side.

Without consulting any one, not even the lawyer, he induced his mother to go with him one morning to a notary, and there place her signature to a document. Adelaide would have signed anything and everything, provided she was left undisturbed in her nest at Saint-Mittre. Pierre promised her an annuity of six hundred francs, and swore that he would look out for both brother and sister.

The poor woman was satisfied, and recited to the notary the lesson her son had taught her. The next day the young man made her sign a receipt in which she admitted having received fifty thousand francs in payment for the land. This was a master-stroke on Pierre's part. He told his mother, who was astonished at having to sign such a receipt, when she had not seen a sou of these fifty thousand francs, that her signature was a mere formality, and the matter not of the slightest importance.

As he slipped this paper in his pocket, he said to himself, with a grim smile :

"Now let these whelps ask for their share. I will show them this receipt and tell them that the old woman has wasted the money. They will never dare to go to law about it!"

Eight days later the dividing wall was gone; the plough had gone over the vegetable garden, and the Fonque property, according to young Rougon's desire, had become

a thing of the past, and a few months later the new owner, the proprietor of Jas-Meiffren, pulled down the old house.

When Pierre had his fifty thousand francs in his hands, he married Félicité Puech with as little delay as possible.

Félicité was a small, dark woman, such as we see so often in Provence, reminding one of those grasshoppers, dry, brown, and noisy, which are found among the almond trees. Thin, hollow-chested, with pointed shoulders, and sharp features, it was difficult to decide on her age. She might have been fifteen or thirty, but she was in reality just nineteen, four years younger than her husband. There was a cat-like cunning in her black eyes, which were narrow and sharp as gimlets. Her low, rounded forehead—her nose, slightly flattened at the extremity, with dilated nostrils, her lips like a scarlet thread, her chin prominent, and her cheek-bones high, gave all the features the look of a cunning dwarf, and veiled the most intolerant ambition, and capabilities for intrigue.

In spite of her positive ugliness, Félicité had a grace of her own, a peculiar fascination. It was said of her that she was plain or pretty at will. This was due, perhaps, to the manner in which she dressed her hair, which was superb, but still more, to the triumphant smile which illuminated her whole dusky face, when she believed herself to have got the better of some one. She considered herself to have been especially ill-treated by Fate—and submitted by fits and starts to be considered insignificant and plain—but would soon arouse herself from this temporary defeat and

vow that the day should come when the whole town should die with envy of her happiness and luxury. And had she been able to act out her life on a broader stage, where her mind could have developed, she would unquestionably have promptly realized this dream.

She was far superior in intelligence to the girls of her own class, whose advantages had been the same as her own.

Gossips said that her mother, who died only a few years after her birth, had been too intimate with the Marquis de Camavant—a young nobleman in the Quartier Saint-Marc. The truth was that Félicité had the hands and feet of a Marquise, which seemed in no way to belong to the race of plebeians from which she descended.

The whole Quartier was astonished for at least a month at her marriage to Pierre Rougon—this almost peasant—this man whose family was certainly not in the odor of sanctity! Félicité let them talk, and received with an odd sort of smile the constrained congratulations of her friends. Her plans were all made. She chose Rougon as an accomplice rather than as a husband. Her father accepted the young man because he saw no other way of obtaining money which might save him from failure. The daughter, however, had better eyes, and looked far into the future, feeling that the day was not far off when she should need the support of a strong man, even if he were a little of a boor, behind whom she could hide, and whose arms and legs she could employ as she pleased. She hated all the petty officials whom she encountered—notaries' clerks,

students-at-law, and the like. Without a dowry there was no prospect of her marrying the son of a rich merchant, and she therefore preferred a peasant whom she could employ as a passive instrument to some person who would crush her from his lofty heights of learning. She thought that a wife could make her husband what she would—and she felt that she had the ability to make a minister out of a cowherd. She found a certain attraction in Rougon's square shoulders, which she thought could carry the world of intrigues she intended to place upon them. She appreciated the strength and the health of her husband, and also divined the acuteness of his intellect, but was still far from comprehending its full extent.

A few days after her marriage she discovered in his secretary the receipt for fifty thousand francs, signed by Adelaide. She understood it at once and was terrified, but in her terror there was no small admiration, and her respect for Rougon at once increased. The new establishment went boldly to work to conquer Fortune. The firm was less involved than had been feared. It was only ready money that was lacking. In the country, trade is managed with certain prudence which often prevents great disasters. Puech and Lecamp were very wise and cautious. The amount of their debts, consequently, was comparatively small, and the fifty thousand francs brought by Pierre were sufficient to pay off the most pressing obligations and start them fairly once more.

They were prosperous from the beginning. The olive harvest for three consecutive years had been abundant.

Félicité had the boldness to induce the firm to buy a quantity of oil and store it. In two years after this, just as the young woman had prophesied, the harvest failed and the firm made a large profit. Puech and Lecamp soon after this retired, and Pierre Rougon carried on the business alone, and believed himself to be on the highway to fortune.

"You have done away with my ill-luck," said Félicité to her husband.

One of the rare weaknesses of this energetic nature was to think herself a victim to Fate. She declared that up to this time nothing had ever succeeded with her father or herself. With her Southern superstition she fought against Destiny as one fights against an enemy in the flesh, who wishes to strangle you.

Facts justified her apprehensions. The ill-luck returned. Each year a new disaster shook the Rougon house. Through a bankrupt debtor thousands were lost. All their calculations made on the olive crop were rendered futile by the most unexpected circumstances. The most promising speculations turned out badly. The whole lookout was most discouraging.

"You see that I was right," said Félicité, bitterly. "I was certainly born under a bad star."

And she was desperate at the idea that she, who had been clever enough to scent out this first brilliant speculation, could now give her husband no good advice or suggestions.

Pierre, less obstinate than his wife, would have lain

down discouraged but for her. She was determined to be rich. She understood that her ambition could have no other foundation than money. Were they to be wealthy they would rule the town, her husband would fill some important position, and she would govern him. All she wanted to carry out her plan was the entering wedge, a few thousand crowns to start with. She felt herself capable of managing men and gaining honors, but she felt a bitter sort of rage in the face of this cold silver and gold which her clever, intriguing mind could not command, and which she could not obtain.

For thirty long years did this battle last, and when Puech died there was another blow, for Félicité, who had anticipated some fourteen thousand francs at least, discovered that her father had sunk his fortune in an annuity. This made her ill. She grew thinner and darker, and fluttered about all day long among the jars of oil like a restless fly. Her husband, on the contrary, thrived on his ill-luck, and grew stouter and more indolent. These thirty years of struggle did not lead them to ruin: on the contrary they made both ends meet each year: if they lost in one six months they repaired this loss in the next season. It was this that exasperated Félicité, who would have preferred a good stout failure.

The early years of their married life brought them many children. In five years she had three sons, and in the succeeding four years two daughters, who, as they had no dowry, were far from welcome.

Before Félicité's sons were ten years old, their mother

had mapped out their future. They should gratify her ambition—they would give her that position and that fortune which she had so long vainly pursued.

It seemed to her impossible if her three sons should live to grow up, that there should not be one of them superior enough to enrich the whole. She felt this and said it. She guarded the children with the tender care of a mother, and with the watchful solicitude of a money-lender, who guards his capital and sees it grow.

“Be careful!” cried Pierre. “Children are ungrateful. You will spoil them, and ruin us.”

When Félicité spoke of sending the boys to college he lost his temper. Latin was a foolish luxury, and they could go to the little day-school round the corner. But the mother carried her point. She was sufficiently cultivated herself to recognize the importance of cultivation, and knew that her sons could never be superior men if they were as illiterate as their father. When Félicité heard her boys conjugate a Latin verb, and speak familiarly to the sons of the Mayor and the Prefect, she was thrilled with joy and pride.

The maintenance of these three boys at college was a heavy tax for several years; and when they had received their diplomas, Félicité induced her husband to send them all to Paris. Two studied law; the third, medicine; and now began the disappointment of the poor parents, who were at the end of their resources, for the three young men in no way gratified the ambition of Rougon and his wife.

One day, when Félicité spoke with some bitterness to

her eldest son of the enormous sums expended on his education, he replied, sharply :

“I will pay it all back to you some day, I hope. But, as you had no fortune, it strikes me that it would have been better to have made something else of us than lawyers and doctors. We are really greatly to be pitied, inasmuch as we suffer more than you, for we belong to no class whatever.”

Félicité understood the deep meaning of these words, ceased to reproach her children, and turned her anger against Fate. When Rougon said to her, “Your sons are lazy fellows!” she would reply : “I trust that I may yet have money to leave them. If they vegetate, it is because they are penniless !”

In 1848, on the eve of the Revolution of February, the three Rougon sons were in Plassans. They were singularly dissimilar, although born of the same parents.

The Rougon race had been purified by its women. Adelaide had made of Pierre something more than an ordinary nature with certain low ambitions. Félicité had given to her sons a broader intelligence, and characters capable of great vices and great virtues.

At this time, the elder, Eugène, was more than forty, slightly bald, and growing stout. He had his father's face—long, with large features. If there was something of the peasant in the square and massive head, the look vanished and the face was transfigured when the heavy eyelids were lifted.

Through one of those caprices of nature, wherein science

now begins to distinguish laws, Eugène's mental resemblance to his mother was quite as remarkable as his physical likeness to his father. He had strong ambition, instincts of command, and a singular contempt for narrow fortunes and economical ways. He was the living proof that Plassans had not erred when it gave to Félicité a little noble blood in her veins.

The love of pleasure, which was a characteristic with the Rougons, assumed in him a more elevated form: pleasure to him meant simply a thirst for domination. Such a man was not likely to succeed in the provinces. He lived there fifteen years, with his eyes and thoughts turned toward Paris, waiting and watching. On his return to the village, in order not to be dependent on his parents, he had inscribed his name as a lawyer. He appeared in court sometimes, and managed to earn his bread without in any way rising above honest mediocrity. At Plassans his voice was considered a drawl; his gestures heavy. It was rarely that he won a cause for a client. He had a way, people said, of wandering from a subject. One day, it was asserted, he so far forgot himself, that he, in a question of damages, offered some political opinions, and was cut short by the judge. He sat down at once, with his singular smile. His client was condemned to pay a considerable sum in consequence of this digression. Eugène, in fact, seemed to consider these pleadings as mere practice which would serve him later.

This his mother could not understand.

She wished to see her son take a high position at the

Plassans bar, and finally formed rather a low estimate of the abilities of her eldest son, who, in her opinion, was not the one who was to make the fortune of the family. Pierre, on the contrary, had the most entire confidence in Eugène; not that his eyes were more penetrating than those of his wife, but because his personal vanity was gratified by believing in the genius and capability of a son who was so marvellously like himself in appearance. A little before those stormy February days Eugène grew very restless. The very stones of Plassans burned his feet; he wandered about like a perturbed spirit, and finally started off for Paris with less than five hundred francs in his pocket.

Aristide, the youngest of the Rougon sons, was as opposite to Eugène as the North Pole is opposite to the South. He had his mother's face and a certain amount of cunning, with an aptitude for vulgar intrigues, when his father's nature appeared. Small and insignificant in appearance, Aristide was always prying in every direction, eager for information and amusement. He loved money as his elder brother loved power. While Eugène dreamed of bending a nation to his will, Aristide saw himself a millionaire, lodged in a princely palace—eating and drinking of the best—enjoying life with every sense and every organ of his body.

The Rougon race—the grasping peasant stock with the appetites of a brute—had ripened too fast in Aristide, who in spite of his delicate feminine instincts was his mother's favorite. She made every excuse for the follies and indolence of her youngest son, saying that he was the clever

man of the family, and that such men had the right to live irregular lives until the day when their abilities make themselves known and felt. Aristide put her indulgence to the test. At Paris his life was simply disgraceful; he was one of those students who make themselves conspicuous in the beer gardens of the Quartier Latin. He was there only two years, for, as he did not pass a single examination, his father ordered him home, and talked of finding a wife for him, in the hope that he would settle down calmly. Life in the country did not displease Aristide, nor did the idea of matrimony. His father consented to the newly married pair living at home, on the condition that the young man should be active in the business. From this moment Aristide lived much in accordance with his tastes, spending half the nights at the club, and most of his days gambling with a few gold pieces which his mother gave him in secret. One must have lived in just such a country place to understand the stultifying life led by this young man for four years. In every small town a number of individuals are to be found living on their parents in just this way—pretending to work, but in reality utterly indolent and helpless.

Aristide was the type of these incorrigible loungers whom one sees living the vacant life of these country towns. For four years he played *écarté*. While he lived at the club, his wife—a gentle, dull blonde—assisted in the ruin of the Rougon family by a most extravagant taste for startling toilettes, and by a most formidable appetite, which was especially remarkable in so frail a looking creature.

Angèle adored blue ribbons and roast beef. She was the daughter of a retired Captain who went by the name of Commandant Sicardot, and who had given to his child all his savings—a dowry of ten thousand francs. This dowry was like a paving stone round the neck of poor Pierre Rougon, for his son handed it over to him, saying: “We need nothing. You support us, my wife and me, and we will settle up later.”

Pierre agreed to this, though he was a little disturbed by his son’s apparent disinterestedness. Aristide was a clever rascal, and said to himself, that it would be a long time before his father would have ten thousand francs to hand over to him, and that during all that time they could continue to live at the expense of his parents. It was really a splendid investment for his money. When it was too late the oil merchant saw the mistake he had made, but he could not rid himself of Aristide, for Angèle’s dowry had been lost in speculations which turned out badly.

He was compelled to keep his son and his son’s wife under his roof, although disgusted and horrified at the indolence of the one and the appetite of the other.

Twenty times he would have put out of the door the vermin that sucked his blood, to use his own energetic expression. Félicité interfered, however. The young man, who had penetrated her ambitious dreams, had each evening a new plan of making his fortune to lay before her. By an accident, which is certainly far from common, she was on the best of terms with her daughter-in-law.

We must here take occasion to say that Angèle was absolutely without a will of her own.

Pierre lost his temper when his wife spoke of the future success of their youngest son, and declared he was far more likely to be their ruin. He went into daily rages during the four years that his son lived with him, but never once did Aristide and Angèle lose their smiling calm.

Finally one day Pierre had a stroke of luck. He was able to return the ten thousand francs to his son. When he wished to settle their accounts Aristide had so many objections to make and so many arguments, that his father allowed them to depart without keeping a sou to cover the expenses of their food and lodging.

The young people established themselves not far off on a little square—Place Saint Louis. The ten thousand francs quickly disappeared. But Aristide in no way changed his mode of life so long as there was money in the house; but when he had reached his last hundred franc-note, he became nervous. He wandered about the town with a careworn look. He took nothing at the club. He looked on at the card-tables, but did not play himself. He had one child in 1840, named Maxime, whom his mother sent to school, which was one month less at Aristide's; but poor Angèle was dying of hunger, and it was necessary for her husband to find a place of some kind. In this search, he at last succeeded, and kept it for ten years with a salary of eighteen hundred francs, which seemed to him an irony of fortune. His mother was not sorry to

see him kick against the pricks, for she hoped that his ambition might prove too strong for his indolence.

Aristide was always on the watch for some freak of fortune, and when his brother, in 1848, left for Paris, he was sorely tempted to follow him, but it was not so easy to carry his wife. To do this required a large sum of ready money. Eugène was unmarried: it was easy for him to make a change. Aristide therefore waited in momentary expectation of some catastrophe, of which he could take advantage.

Pascal, the other Rougon son, was like no other member of the family. It was one of those frequent cases which disturb the laws of hereditary resemblance. Nothing in the physique or character of Pascal recalled the Rougons. Tall, with a calm, severe face, he had an honesty of purpose, a passionate love of study, and an excessive modesty which contrasted strangely with the ambitious fever and the somewhat unscrupulous notions of his family. After having finished his medical studies with credit to himself, he returned to Plassans because he liked the place, and preferred the calm and quiet life of the country. He made no effort to obtain a large practice, but contented himself with those persons who came to him by chance. All his luxury consisted in the fresh, pretty house in which he shut himself up, and busied himself with his studies in Natural History. He had an especial passion for Physiology. It was known to the town that he bought subjects for dissection from the Hospital, and for this reason was looked upon with horror by certain

delicate ladies, and cowardly bourgeois, who did not go so far as to treat him as a sorcerer, but who called him "an original," with the air of meaning much more than they said.

The Mayor's wife was heard to say one day: "I should rather die than call in that man. He smells of death!"

Pascal was quite undisturbed by this foolish fear with which he inspired these people. The fewer patients he had, the more time would be his to occupy himself with his dear sciences. But as he had placed his prices at a low figure the common people were faithful to him. He made just enough to live on, and lived happily amid his books and studies, and occasionally sent a paper to the Academy of Sciences.

Plassans did not know that "this original,"—this man who smelled of death—was well known and highly respected in the scientific world. When he was seen starting forth on an excursion among the hills, with a botany box hung at his neck, and a geologist's hammer in his hand, they shrugged their shoulders and compared him to another doctor of the town, always so well dressed, who was such a favorite of the ladies, and who always had about him such a delicious odor of violets.

Nor was Pascal understood by his parents. His mother overwhelmed him with reproaches, when she saw the strange life he led. She, who endured with equanimity the indolence of Aristide, could not behold without anger, Pascal's calm contentment, his humility, and his contempt for riches.

"No one would ever suppose you belonged to us," she would say, impatiently. "Look at your brothers: they try to make a figure in the world, and so recompense us for the sacrifices we have made. But you are absolutely simple."

Pascal, who preferred to laugh rather than lose his temper, answered, with fine irony,

"You need not complain. I will not make you absolutely bankrupt. I will take care of you all for nothing when you are ill."

He lived entirely apart from his family—not from any repugnance to them, but because he was absorbed in his studies. For several years he had occupied himself with the great problem of hereditary transmission, comparing the animal kingdom with the human race; and he was intensely interested in the curious results that he obtained. The observations he made on himself and his family were his starting-point of these studies.

The people understood, with their wonderful intuition, that he differed from the Rougons, and called him always "Dr. Pascal" without adding the surname.

About three years before the Revolution of 1848, Pierre and Félicité gave up their business. They were both over fifty, and weary of the contest. They were so imbued with a sense of their ill-luck that they thought it safer to retire while they had a few francs. Their sons had been a great disappointment to them, and they had lost all hope of being enriched by them, and were anxious to secure a loaf of bread for their old age.

They retired with forty thousand francs, the income of which allowed them to live the economical life of the provinces. Fortunately there were only themselves, as Marthe and Sidonie were married, one living at Marseilles, the other in Paris.

They would have liked to reside in the New Quartier among the retired merchants, but as they did not dare to attempt this with their restricted means, as a sort of compromise they hired rooms in La Rue de la Baune, the street which separates the New Quartier from the old; they were thus on the threshold of the promised land.

Their lodgings were on the second story and consisted of three large rooms—dining-room, bed-room and salon. On the first floor lived the proprietor, a cane and umbrella maker, whose shop was in the Rez de Chaussée. The house was narrow and deep and had only two stories. When Félicité moved, it was with a heavy heart. To live with others in provincial towns is an avowal of poverty. Each well-to-do family in Plassans has its own house and furniture. Pierre held the purse-strings tightly and would not hear of any embellishments. The old furniture, worn and faded, must do duty in their new quarters without even being repaired. Félicité toiled hard to give a brighter aspect to these goods and chattels, and rubbed and varnished the tables and chairs until they shone.

The dining-room, which was back of all the others, remained nearly empty—a table and a dozen chairs were literally lost in the large room whose window opened on the gray wall of a house in the rear. As no stranger ever

entered the bed-room, Félicité gathered together there all the wrecks which she could not make up her mind to utterly discard—a wardrobe, two cradles, a buffet with only one door, and a bookcase which was totally empty.

She lavished all her cares on the salon, of which she succeeded in making quite a habitable spot. The furniture was yellow velvet with satin flowers; a table stood in the centre and at either end a console with mirrors. There was even a square of carpet, and a chandelier covered with a netting. On the walls were six lithographs, representing Napoleon's great battles. All these ornaments dated from the first days of the Empire. By dint of much coaxing Félicité had obtained a paper for her walls—orange, with huge branches. Thus the salon had a strange, tawny light, suggestive of the sunlight; everything was yellow: furniture, paper, curtains, and even the marbles of the guéridon and console. When the curtains were drawn the tints were really soft and harmonious. But Félicité had quite other dreams of luxury. She contemplated with a feeling of utter despair this poorly concealed poverty. Her one amusement in which she found both pain and pleasure, was to station herself at one of the windows of this room looking out on La Rue de la Baune and across to La Place de la Sous-Préfecture. That was the Paradise of which she had dreamed. The houses so carefully kept, so neat and fresh, seemed to her an Eden. She would have given ten years of her life to possess one of these dwellings. One house in particular filled her with envy. She watched it with curiosity and longing. Sometimes when the windows

were open, she caught a glimpse of red furniture which stirred her blood with their suggestions of luxury.

At this time the Rougons were passing through a curious crisis in their lives. They regarded themselves as victims of Fate, but they made no profession of being resigned to this, but on the contrary, declared they had not given up the hope of dying wealthy, nevertheless each day of poverty weighed more and more heavily upon them. They shivered as they recounted to each other their thirty years of useless struggles, and their disappointment in their children. They were filled with rage as they looked around this yellow salon whose curtains must be drawn to hide its ugliness.

Then, to console themselves, they made all sorts of plans for the acquisition of a colossal fortune. Félicité dreamed that she had won in a lottery the grand prize of 100,000 francs; Pierre imagined that he had achieved some marvellous invention.

They had but one idea, to make a fortune—to be rich and to enjoy their riches, if it were only for a year, and continued with that selfishness peculiar to parents who cannot become accustomed to the idea of having educated their children without deriving some personal advantage, to look forward vaguely to being enriched through their sons.

Félicité showed no mark of age; she was the same little dark woman, as restless and active as a grasshopper. A stranger seeing her walking in front of him would have taken her for a girl of sixteen, from her slender figure and active step. Her face had, to be sure, a few more wrinkles

—it was like that of a child gradually hardening into parchment.

Pierre Rougon had grown stout. His pasty pale face and pompous air indicated wealth. He heard some one say one day in reply to a question:

“No, I do not know his name, but he is some rich fellow who has no need to worry as to where his dinner is coming from!”

These words went to his heart, for to remain poor and look like a millionaire struck him as a bitter mockery. When he shaved himself on Sunday before a tiny mirror that cost five sous, he thought himself far more dignified in appearance than the mayor, or in fact than any of the officials of Plassans.

This peasant's son, pale with the cares of commerce, stout from his sedentary life, hiding his malevolent passions under the natural placidity of his countenance, had in fact an air of solemnity befitting a man who had passed his life in official salons.

It was said that his wife led him by the nose, but this was not so; he was brutally obstinate, and by no means easily managed. Félicité was shrewd enough—when she wished to gain anything from her husband—or to induce him to take the path she believed to be the best, to flutter about him, attack him on all sides with pin-pricks, and keep up the assault until he yielded almost without perceiving it. He felt that she was keener than himself, and therefore submitted to her advice; husband and wife never disagreed except on the old question of the education of their children.

The Revolution of 1848 found all the Rougon family on the *qui vive*, exasperated by their incessant bad luck, and disposed to grasp at Fortune with rough hands should they ever encounter it.

They were like a family of banditti, ready for anything. Eugène watched Paris; Aristide dreamed of pillaging Plassans, while the father and mother waited in hopes of profiting by their sons' success.

Pascal was the only one indifferent to the outer world. He spent his life in quiet seclusion in his pretty little house in the new part of the city.

CHAPTER III.

PLASSANS AND POLITICS.

AT Plassans—a town in which the division of classes was very clearly defined in 1848, the effect of political events was very strongly marked. The voice of the people is, to-day, well-nigh stifled. The middle classes are prudent, the nobility despondent, and the clergy cunning. Kings may ascend a throne, or Republics may be founded, and Plassans sleeps while Paris fights.

The surface may be smooth, but below a turmoil is going on, curious enough to study. The streets are calm enough, but an intriguing spirit pervades the salons of the Quartier Saint-Marc.

Until 1850 the people were of no account. The clergy, the bourgeoisie and the nobility were all. The priests gave the tone to the politics of the place—they were like subterranean mines, underlying the whole upper strata, and their timid tactics did not permit a step to be taken, either forward or back, in ten years. These secret struggles of men who wish, above all things, to avoid any noise, demand a peculiar finesse, an aptitude in trifles, and incalculable patience. And thus it is that the provincial slowness at which Parisians laugh, is really made up of treacheries—of defeats and hidden victories. These men, when their interests demand it, bring down their victims within the

houses by successive blows, as Parisians kill theirs in the public squares by salvos of artillery.

The political history of Plassans, as well as that of all the small towns of Provence, offers one curious peculiarity. Until 1850 the inhabitants were Catholics and Royalists. The people swore by God and by His legitimate kings. Then a strange change took place. All religious faith disappeared, and the people, deserting the cause of Legitimacy, gave themselves by degrees to the great Democratic movement of the day.

When the Revolution of 1848 burst out, the Nobility and the Clergy stood alone in their work of aiding the triumph of Henri V. They had long regarded the accession of the Orleans as a ridiculous experiment, which would eventually restore the Bourbons. Their hopes were disappointed but they did not give up the contest, although much scandalized at the defection of the faithful. The Quartier Saint-Marc was all astir. Among the Bourgeoisie and the people the enthusiasm was great. The new Republicans were in haste to display their Revolutionary fever. But among the residents of the new part of the town this beautiful fire had the brilliancy and the duration of a fire of straw. The retired merchants and petty shop-keepers, who had slept comfortably with the assurance that their fortunes were quietly growing under the monarchy, were soon seized with a panic. The Republic with its chances made them tremble for their money-boxes. Thus, when the clerical reaction of '49 sat in, all the Bourgeoisie of Plassans passed over to the Conservative party, and were received with open arms.

Never before had the nobles of Saint-Marc been on such terms of familiarity with merchants and attorneys, and this was quite enough to excite the enthusiasm of the new recruits. To obtain these results the clergy had worked with incredible patience.

The nobility of Plassans were in a lethargy apparently. They kept their religious faith, which showed itself in no acts; and when the catastrophe of 1848 should have thrilled them with hope for the return of the Bourbons, it found them indifferent and dull. They uttered a few vague words of throwing themselves into the *mêlée*, and did not leave their firesides. The clergy combated unceasingly with this feeling of powerlessness and resignation, for a priest only struggles more energetically when he despairs. The whole policy of the church is to struggle on, even if the results of these struggles must be indefinitely postponed—postponed for centuries, if it must be. They are not idle meanwhile, but push on continually to the front.

It was the clergy at Plassans who led the reaction, and the ground was certainly well prepared for them. This old Royalist town, this population of peaceful Bourgeoisie, would sooner or later range themselves on the side of order. The great question now was to strangle the Republic, and the Republic was in its death-throes. There were not more than a thousand out of the ten thousand mechanics, who formerly saluted the tree of liberty planted in the middle of the square, who still bowed before it.

The shrewdest politicians in Plassans—those who

directed the Revolutionary movement—did not scent the Empire until later. The popularity of Prince Louis Napoleon seemed to them a mere passing caprice of the people, nor were they inspired by any admiration of the Prince personally. They regarded him as a nonentity, incapable of ruling France with a steady hand. In their eyes he was a mere instrument of which they could make use, and of whom they could rid themselves when the hour came, or when the true Pretendant should appear.

But as months passed away they became anxious, and also vaguely conscious that they had been duped. They had, however, no time to act, for the Coup d'état burst over their heads, and the Clergy and Nobility were forced to applaud,—to accept it as a partial triumph—and to postpone until a later date the realization of their hopes—revenging their mistakes by uniting with the Bonapartists to crush the Republicans.

These events made the fortunes of the Rougon family, who grew like weeds on the ruins of Liberty.

Félicité, whose nose was the most delicate among them, quickly comprehended that they were on a good scent. She buzzed restlessly about her husband to stir him up. He was terrified at the first rumors of the Revolution, but when his wife pointed out to him that he had much to gain and little to lose by the change, he was quickly converted to her opinion.

“I do not know what you can do,” said Félicité, “but it seems to me that there is something. Did not Monsieur de Carnavant say the other day that he would be rich if

Henri V. should ever return, and that this king would well reward all those who had worked for his return? It may be that our fortune lies in that direction."

The Marquis de Carnavant was the Noble who, according to the gossip of the town, had been the lover of Félicité's mother. He came occasionally to call on the Rougons. He was a small man, thin, active, and about seventy-five. It was said that he had wasted on women all that remained of the small fortune which his father, an émigré, had bequeathed to him. He admitted his poverty with the best grace in the world. He resided with one of his relatives, the Comte de Valqueyras, eating at his table, and occupying a tiny room in the attic.

"Little one," he said, tapping Félicité on the cheek, "if ever Henri V. gives me back my fortune, I will make you my heir."

Félicité was fifty, and yet he never called her anything but "little one," or "child." It was of these familiar taps and these vague promises that Madame Rougon thought, when she urged her husband to enter into politics, and when she pointed out her reasons to Pierre, he was quite ready to follow her bidding.

The Marquis was, in the early days of the Republic, the active agent of the Reactionary movement. This little man, who had all to gain by the return of the legitimate sovereigns, occupied himself eagerly with the triumph of their cause. While the rich noblesse of the Quartier Saint-Marc slumbered in mute despair—fearing by any rash step to compromise themselves and be again con-

demned to exile—he busied himself in making new converts and bringing back the old. His visits to the Rougons were daily, for a centre of operations was needed by him. His host, the Comte Valqueyras, had forbidden him to introduce one of his political associates under his roof, and he was rejoiced to make use of Félicité's yellow salon. Pierre, too, he found extremely useful, as he could not very well go himself and preach the cause of Legitimacy to the workmen in the old Quartier, he would have been hissed; but Pierre, on the contrary, had lived among these people, spoke their language, knew their needs and ways, and catechised them adroitly. He became indispensable to the Marquis, and in less than a fortnight the Rougons were more Royalists than the king himself. The Marquis, seeing Pierre's zeal, took shelter behind him. What was the good of being seen himself when a man with such broad shoulders could bear the whole responsibility? He let Pierre swell with pomposity, and talk as if he ruled everything, while he himself pushed him on, or held him back as he pleased, or considered necessary.

The old oil merchant was soon an important person. Félicité would say to him when they were alone:

“Go on boldly; fear nothing. We are on a good road and we shall be rich—have a salon, and can give soirées.”

And in this way did a circle of conspirators gather together every night in the yellow salon to plan the downfall of the Republic.

There were three or four retired merchants who trembled for their fortunes, and who demanded a strong and

steady government. There was a certain Rondier, with an insinuating countenance, who talked with passionate vehemence of the disarrangement of all his plans caused by the fall of Louis Phillippe. The Revolution had killed all his hopes, but his fortune and his former connection with the Tuileries gave him a certain prestige; for when a man has made money in Paris, and condescends to spend it in the country, he always acquires there an enormous influence, people listening to him as if he were an oracle.

But the strongest mind in the salon was the Commandant Secardot, the father-in-law of Aristide. He was a perfect Hercules in appearance, and his red face and gray whiskers gave him a very soldier-like air. He had much to say of his campaigns, recalling with pride Napoleon's great reign, and commenting with bitter scorn on the barricades and street skirmishes which had taken place in February.

At the Rougons was also to be seen a person with cold, clammy hands and furtive glances—Vuillet by name, a man who furnished all sorts of holy images, relics and beads, to the devout of the town. He was the librarian also of a classical as well as a religious library. He was a rigid Catholic, which assured him a large custom among the converts. He, by a stroke of genius, added to his business the publication of a semi-weekly journal—the *Gazette de Plassans*—devoted exclusively to the interests of the Clergy. This journal was by no means a pecuniary success, but it made him the champion of the church.

This illiterate man, whose orthography was more than doubtful, himself corrected the articles of the *Gazette* with humility and fidelity, which took the place of talent. The Marquis saw this, and was struck by the advantages he might gain from this dull-looking person and from his interested pen. From that time the *Gazette* improved. The Marquis corrected the proof. The yellow salon presented a very odd appearance every evening now. The most contrary opinions elbowed each other, but all were against the Republic. The Marquis soothed each little quarrel as fast as it rose; he wielded a strong influence, for every one was at heart deeply flattered by the pressure of the hand with which the Marquis greeted them when he entered the room. Rondier alone, as a free-thinker, laughed at the airs and graces of the Marquis, saying that he had not a sou. The old nobleman saw this, but was apparently blind. He was the soul of the group. He commanded in the name of unknown persons.

"They desire this and they object to that," he said. When the Marquis pronounced the mysterious "They," the whole assembly was thrilled. Félicité was intensely happy, she gloried in her salon and its guests. She was a little ashamed of her shabby furniture, but consoled herself with the thought of the magnificence by which she should be surrounded as soon as the good cause triumphed. The Rougons had taken their Royalism very seriously. Félicité went so far as to say, that if they had failed to make their fortune, it was on account of the Revolution of

July. This was by way of giving a political coloring to their poverty.

This salon soon became, owing to the influence of the clergy, the centre of Plassans politics. In April, 1849, Eugène left Paris and passed a couple of weeks with his father. The real end and aim of this visit no one ever knew, but it was believed that he came to feel the pulse of the public, and see if he had any chance of being sent to the National Assembly from his native town. He was too wise to risk a defeat, and probably public opinion struck him as being unfavorable, for he abstained from any attempt in that direction.

When he appeared, however, at Plassans, they sought to make him talk, he feigned utter ignorance, however, and made others open their lips instead, listening intently to all that was said in the yellow salon. He took his seat on the arrival of the first guest, as far as possible from the light, and sat with impassive countenance. When his opinion was asked, he answered politely, agreeing with the majority. Nothing seemed to exhaust his patience: neither the visionary utterances of the Marquis, who talked of the Bourbons as if it were thirty years earlier, nor the effusive moans of Rondier, who grew very plaintive as he told how many pair of socks he had once been in the habit of furnishing to the Citizen King.

Eugène's eyes sometimes laughed, but his lips never lost their gravity. His courteous way of listening conciliated every one. Vuillet alone looked at him doubtfully. This librarian, a combination of a sacristan and a journalist, said

little, but saw much. He noticed that the newcomer talked a great deal apart with the Commandant Secardot, but he could never catch a word uttered by either, for Eugène silenced Secardot by a look as soon as any one approached. Secardot about this time began to speak of Napoleon with a mysterious smile.

Two days before his return to Paris, Eugène was consulted by his brother Aristide, who was in great perplexity. He had for some little time affected the keenest admiration for the new government. His intelligence, quickened by his two years in Paris, saw further than the duller brains of Plassans. He saw the powerlessness of both Legitimists and Orleanists, but could not clearly discern the third robber who had come to steal the Republic. He meant, however, at all costs, to be on the side of victory.

He had broken with his father, speaking of him in public as an old imbecile, bejuggled by the influence of the nobles, who were making a tool of him for their own purposes.

“My mother is an intelligent woman,” he said, “and I would never have imagined her capable of urging her husband to indulge in such chimerical hopes. They will end by losing every sou they have in the world. But women never ought to meddle with politics.”

Aristide intended to sell himself as dearly as possible; but, unfortunately, he was groping in the dark, for in the country, away from Paris, he felt himself utterly lost. While waiting for the course of events to be more clearly

defined, he retained the position he had first assumed of an enthusiastic Republican, and in this manner not only retained his office, but had even succeeded in having his salary raised.

Impelled, however, to play some rôle, he had written some articles of so incendiary a character that he shivered when he looked them over. These were printed in a Democratic journal, published by a friend. He was especially severe in his allusions to those persons who most frequented his father's salon, for the wealth of some of them exasperated him to such a degree that he lost all prudence. He had thus made several bitter enemies, for the author of these attacks was more than suspected. It was just at this time that Eugène arrived at Plassans. To this elder brother, Aristide had always accorded great ability. In his opinion, Eugène slept with one eye open, like a cat watching at a mouse-hole; and when he heard of the cordiality shown by him toward the habitués of the yellow salon, and of his especial deference to the Marquis, he asked himself, anxiously, what he could believe? Had he been mistaken? Had the Legitimists a chance of success? This idea filled him with terror.

The evening before he met Eugène he had published an article reflecting on the clergy, in reply to a statement made by Vuillet, who was his *bête noir*. Never a week passed that the two men did not exchange personalities.

Aristide, who did not wish to show his anxiety, said, carelessly:

"Did you read my article yesterday? What did you think of it?"

Eugène shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a simpleton," he replied, quietly.

"Then," cried his brother, "you think Vuillet in the right?"

Eugène was about to reply that he thought Vuillet as great a simpleton as himself, when catching the gleam of anxiety in his brother's eyes, he checked himself.

"Vuillet is not altogether wrong," he said, calmly.

Aristide, on leaving his brother, was really more perplexed than before. But he made up his mind to be wary, and not to tie his hands in such a way that he could not use them to aid in strangling the Republic.

The morning of his departure, Eugène took his father aside and had a long conversation with him. In vain did Félicité try to hear what was said. The two men talked very low, as if they feared a word should be overheard. When they entered her presence, both seemed unusually animated, and her son, who usually spoke in a slow, soft voice, said quickly to his father:

"You understand me, sir, I trust. That is our road to fortune. In that direction must we work with all our strength. Be sure that I am right."

"I will follow your instructions to the letter," answered Rougon; "but you must not forget the recompense for my labors which I have asked."

"If we succeed, you will have no reason for dissatisfaction—that I promise you. I will write and keep you informed. But you must obey me quietly and blindly."

"What are you plotting?" asked Félicité, curiously.

"My dear mother," replied Eugène, with a smile, "you have so little confidence in me that I cannot confide all my hopes to you, for as yet they have small foundation. Faith is needed to comprehend me. Besides, my father will instruct you when the hour comes."

And, as Félicité looked deeply offended, he whispered in her ear :

"I have confidence in you, although you doubt me. But too much intelligence will do us harm just now. When the crisis arrives, you will be the one on whom I shall lean."

He went away, but turned back to say :

"Be very guarded with Aristide ; he is a blunderhead, who will spoil everything. But I have studied him enough to know that he will always fall on his feet. If we make our fortunes, he will know how to steal his share."

When Eugène had gone, his mother did her best to discover the secret of his conversation with Pierre. She knew her husband too well to interrogate him openly. He would have answered her angrily that it was none of her affairs. But notwithstanding all the marvellous tact and ingenuity she displayed, she learned absolutely nothing. Eugène had selected his confident well; for Pierre, much flattered by his son's choice, was more impassible and apparently obtuse than ever. When Félicité fully comprehended that she could never elicit a word of information, she ceased to try. But she was intensely curious as to the meaning of the one sentence she had heard.

The two men had spoken of a price stipulated upon by Pierre. What was this price? Félicité cared little for the political side of the question, but this part of it touched her more nearly, and she burned to know the nature of the bargain.

One evening, when her husband was in an especially good humor, she led the conversation toward the annoyances entailed by their poverty.

"It is about time that this should end," she said. "We are ruining ourselves in wood and oil since these gentlemen have been frequenting our salon in this way. Who will pay our bills? No one, apparently."

Her husband fell into the snare. He smiled in a lofty manner.

"Patience," he said; "have a little patience."

Then he added with a cunning air, looking his wife full in the eyes:

"Would you like to be the wife of a Receiver-general?"

Félicité colored with joy.

"At Plassans do you mean?"

Pierre nodded. He enjoyed his wife's surprise.

"But," she said, "enormous securities would be required. I heard that our neighbor Monsieur Pierotte was obliged to deposit eighty thousand francs in the Treasury."

"I dare say; but that is not my concern. Eugène will attend to all that through a Parisian banker. At first Eugène objected, but I was firm, and he yielded. To be a Receiver one does not need either Greek or Latin."

Félicité listened in a paroxysm of delight.

"Our dear son," continued Pierre, "thought we had best go to some other town, but I wished to remain here."

"To be sure," said the old lady. "We have suffered here, and here we will triumph. I will crush them all with envy—all those ladies who have looked so contemptuously at my woollen dresses. But I did not think of your being Receiver. I thought you would prefer to be Mayor."

"Mayor! That is absurd. Eugène said something about that, but I said instantly, 'No, not unless you assure me a salary of fifteen thousand francs.'"

This conversation filled Félicité with enthusiasm. She murmured over the words "fifteen thousand francs," and then in a solemn tone said :

"Let us make a calculation. How much do you suppose you will have?"

"About three thousand francs, I presume, and a certain percentage on the receipts, which at Plassans would bring up the amount to some fifteen thousand. That is what Pierotte has. But that is not all. Pierotte has a private banking-house. It is permitted. It is a risky business, but I shall venture it, I think."

"Let us call it twenty thousand, then," said Félicité, with a gasp. "We shall be as rich as any of these gentlemen. Are the Marquis and any of these people to divide the cake with you?"

"No, indeed ; it will all be ours."

And as she urged him still further, Pierre frowned, thinking she would tear his secret from him.

"We have talked enough," he said. "It is late; let us sleep. A thousand things may happen to prevent my having the place. Take care what you do and what you say."

The lamp was put out, but Félicité could not sleep. She closed her eyes and built the most marvellous castles in the air. She selected the furniture for her new apartment, and dreamed of superb toilettes. She would be able to revenge herself on these gentlemen who entered her salon as if it were a café, merely to learn the news of the day. She had been intensely annoyed at the cavalier fashion in which these people came to her. Even the Marquis, with his ironical smile, displeased her. Therefore the prospect of triumphing over all these persons was very sweet to her, and she gloated over it all night. The next day, opening her blinds, she smiled as she saw the ample damask curtains hanging over Monsieur Pierotte's windows.

Like all women, Félicité loved a bit of mystery, but she was excessively curious to know what was expected of Pierre. Suppose he made a mistake! Suppose Eugène were to draw him into some entanglement from which he could escape only by the sacrifice of the little property he had!

Yet she was not without faith. Eugène had such an air of authority that she could not but believe in him. Pierre spoke of the persons high in authority whom her son knew in Paris. She knew nothing of his associates or habits of life, while it was impossible for her to close her eyes on the follies committed by Aristide at Plassans.

In her own salon he was commented upon with severity. Granoux called him brigand between his teeth, while Rondier said, more than once: "Your son is too clever by half. Yesterday he attacked our friend Vuillet in the most revolting manner."

All the salon agreed in chorus. Pierre formally repudiated his son, while the poor mother dropped her head, and silently devoured her tears. She with difficulty restrained herself from crying out to Rondier that her dear child, with all his faults, was far above him and all the others. But she was in fetters; she dared not compromise a position so laboriously acquired.

The next day she saw her son secretly, and entreated him not to irritate the habitués of the yellow salon. Aristide told her that it was she who was to blame, for allowing her husband to be the tool of the Marquis. Félicité was so overwhelmed by this accusation that she determined, in the event of Eugène's success, to share the results with Aristide, who was still her favorite son.

After the departure of Eugène, Pierre Rougon fell back into his old life. Nothing seemed in the smallest degree changed in that yellow salon. The same faces appeared there each successive evening to make the same propaganda in favor of a Monarchy, and the master of the house listened to them with the same approval as before. Eugène had left Plassans on the 1st of May, and a few days later there was a grand excitement in the yellow salon. A violent discussion took place in regard to the letter written by the President of the Republic to General Oudinot, in which the siege of Rome was decided upon.

This letter was regarded as a brilliant victory, due to the firm stand taken by the Reactionary party. Since 1848 the Chambers had discussed the Roman question; it was reserved to a Bonaparte to stifle a new-born Republic, by an intervention of which France, when free, would never have been capable.

One evening, a month later, the Commandant entered the salon, and announced that the French army were fighting under the walls of Rome.

As he said this he pressed Pierre's hand in a significant fashion, and as soon as he was seated, began to eulogize the President, who, he said, was the only man who could save France from anarchy.

"Let him save her at once," said the Marquis; "or let him do his duty and hand her over to her lawful masters."

Pierre seemed to approve of this reply. Having done this, he ventured to say that his sympathies were with Louis Bonaparte in this matter.

This remark was followed by an interchange of phrases between himself and the Commandant in praise of the President, which seemed to have been prepared for the occasion. For the first time Bonapartism seemed to have entered the yellow salon, where, to be sure, since the election of December, the Prince had been treated with a certain gentleness; but to-night Pierre's and the Commandant's eulogies were accepted with enthusiasm.

The Marquis stood leaning against the mantel, with his eyes fixed on a faded rose on the carpet at his feet. When he finally lifted his head, Pierre, who had been watching him stealthily, saw him smile slightly.

Vuillet said, in his sharp voice:

"I should rather see your Bonaparte in London than Paris. Our affairs would get on better."

The oil merchant turned very pale.

"I do not know what you mean by 'my' Bonaparte; I only intend to say that this expedition to Rome is a good thing."

Félicité followed this scene with curiosity and astonishment. The smile of the Marquis gave her much to think of.

From this day Rougon never lost an opportunity of saying a word in favor of the President of the Republic, and the Commandant Secardot was sure to reply in the same key.

It was not until the following year that the triumph of the Rougon party in Plassans was decisive. The new part of the town made them an absolute ovation the day that the Tree of Liberty was torn up. This tree, a young poplar brought from the banks of the Viorne, was gradually withering away, to the great despair of the workmen, who came every Sunday to watch the progress of the calamity, without being able to comprehend the cause of this slow decay. A hatter declared that he had seen a woman come from the Rougon house, and pour a bucket of poisoned water at the foot of the tree. The story was then circulated that Félicité herself watered the tree every night with vitriol. The tree was dead at all events, and the Municipality declared that the dignity of the Republic demanded that it should be carried away. As they

feared that the discontent of the people would express itself, a late hour of the evening was selected for this task. The Conservatives of the Ville Neuve made a little fête of the occasion. They came in a body to the Square to see the Tree of Liberty laid low. The habitués of the yellow salon stationed themselves at the windows. When the tree swayed, and finally fell with the stiffness of a hero, struck by Death, Félicité waved a white handkerchief. Then the crowd applauded, and the spectators waved their handkerchiefs also. A group came under the window, and cried out:

“We will bury it—we will bury it deep!”

They spoke of course of the Republic. This was a glorious evening for Madame Rougon.

The Marquis smiled mysteriously as he watched her. This old gentleman was too keen-sighted not to see where France was drifting. He was one of the first to anticipate the Empire, and only a little later admitted frankly that his cause was lost. Vuillet felt only that Henri V. had become detestable; but he did not care; he could only obey his masters, the priests. All his politics amounted to, was to sell as many rosaries and holy images as possible.

As to Rondier and Granoux they were—so to speak—dumb and blind. They did not seem to have an opinion: they merely wished to eat and sleep in peace.

The Marquis, though with nothing further to hope for, came no less regularly to the Rougons. They amused him. He, with malicious pleasure, retained in his own heart the

conviction which he felt that the hour of the Bourbons had not come. He obeyed the orders given by the clergy with even more than his customary docility. He had long since penetrated Pierre's new tactics, and he supposed Félicité to be his accomplice.

One evening he found her alone in the salon when he entered.

"Ah, well, my dear child," he said, with smiling familiarity. "How are your affairs progressing? What is the use of deceiving me?"

"I do not understand you," answered Félicité.

"It is foolish to attempt to deceive an old fox like me," he continued. "Treat me like a friend, my child. I am always ready to aid you secretly; only be frank with me."

Félicité had a brilliant idea. She had nothing to tell, but she could learn from him, if she only knew how to hold her tongue.

"I was sure you were behind your husband, for he is not sharp enough to invent the pretty little treason which you have prepared. I wish with all my heart that the Bonapartes may give you all that I hoped to have obtained for you from the Bourbons."

This simple phrase confirmed all Madame Rougon's suspicions.

"Then Prince Louis has all the chances?" she said, eagerly.

"Will you betray me, if I tell you what I think?" asked the Marquis, with a smile. "I am an old man now, and I am only working for you. But as you have found a

prosperous path without my assistance, I will accept my own defeat, and rejoice in your triumph. But have no concealments from me, for I am always ready to help you."

At this moment several of the habitués appeared.

"Here they come," said the Marquis. "Remember that the great art in politics consists in having two sharp eyes when other people are blind. You have all the good cards in your hand."

The next day Félicité determined to gain a certainty. It was then early in 1851. For eighteen months Rougon had received every two weeks regularly, a letter from his son Eugène. He always locked himself into his bedroom to read these letters, which he then put into an old secretary, the key of which he kept in his vest pocket. When his wife questioned him, he said simply:

"Oh! Eugène is well enough!"

For a long time Félicité had been watching her chance to lay her hands on these letters from her son. The next morning, while Pierre was asleep, she rose and went on tip-toe for the key of the commode, which she substituted for the key in the vest pocket. As soon as her husband had gone out, she opened the drawer and read the letters with feverish curiosity.

She found full confirmation of her suspicions: there were at least forty letters in which she could follow the movements of the Bonapartists. It was almost a journal which lay before her, giving the events of the days as they elapsed, and drawing from each, hopes and counsel. Eugène had faith. He spoke of Louis Bonaparte as of the

man who alone could disentangle the situation. He had believed in him even before his return to France, when Bonapartism was treated as a ridiculous chimera. Félicité understood that her son, since 1848, had been an active agent. Although he did not explain his position very clearly, it was evident that he was working for the Empire under the orders of the persons whom he named familiarly.

He also told his father precisely what he ought to do at Plassans, which explained to Félicité certain things her husband had done, which at the time had puzzled her greatly. Pierre obeyed his son, and obeyed him blindly. When the old lady finished these letters, all was clear to her. Eugène intended to make his fortune and to recompense his parents for all they had done for him at the same time. His letters contained repeated cautions, and Félicité experienced a certain feeling of gratitude. She read again certain passages which spoke of the final catastrophe. This catastrophe, of which she literally knew nothing, became to her like the end of the world—"God would place the Elect on one side of the Great White Throne;" among these she stood, while on the other were poor lost souls.

She succeeded in returning the key, but she also promised herself to see each letter as it came, and also to appear as ignorant as before. These tactics succeeded perfectly, as she thus aided her husband constantly without his knowledge. She constantly led the conversation in the desired direction at the decisive moment. She suffered acutely from Eugène's distrust, and wished to say to him when success was insured:

"I knew all, and, far from spoiling things, I have assisted in the triumph."

Never did a confidante make so little noise and do such inestimable services. The Marquis, to whom she had told the whole story, was quite wonderstruck at her conduct.

She was much disturbed by the rash acts of her dear Aristide. She wished to convert this ardent Republican to the Napoleonic ideas, but she did not know how to do it in a sufficiently prudent way. She remembered how earnestly Eugène had bade them beware of Aristide. The Marquis agreed with her entirely.

"Let Aristide alone," he said; "he does not seem to me to be of the kind who will long continue to play the rôle of a martyr."

In her desire to indoctrinate all about her, Félicité approached her son Pascal, who, with the selfishness of a savant absorbed in his researches, cared nothing for politics. Empires might crumble, and he would not be disturbed from his experiments. His mother entreated him:

"Come," she said, "and pass your evenings occasionally with us. You will make acquaintances there which will be of use to you, and who may employ you as their physician. All your present patients are poor, and pay you nothing."

The idea of succeeding, of seeing all her family rich, had become a monomania with Félicité. Pascal therefore—to oblige her—appeared in the yellow salon occasionally, and found it less tiresome than he supposed. The people there seemed to him like curious animals which hitherto had escaped his observation. He listened to their empty

gabble as if it had been the mewling of a cat or the barking of a dog. In fact, he regarded this salon as a menagerie. The Marquis reminded him of a large green grasshopper, while Vuillet struck him as like a toad, and Rondier as a fat sheep. The old Commandant was a toothless shepherd dog, and he wondered how it was that Granoux, who looked so like a calf, did not leave the room on four legs, instead of two.

"Why do you not talk to these people?" said Madame Rougon.

"Because I am not a veterinary surgeon," was the reply.

Félicité took him aside one evening and tried to catechise him. She cherished the secret hope of seeing him the fashionable physician at Plassans, but she wished that he should start fair as a warm partisan of the régime which should succeed the Republic.

"My dear boy," she said, "why can you not be reasonable? You must think of your future. You are called a Republican because you take care of all those people in the lower town without pay. Tell me, what are your political opinions?"

Pascal opened his eyes wide.

"My opinions," he repeated, with a smile, "I hardly know. You say I am supposed to be a Republican. Well, I do not know that I care. I am one, if to be a Republican means that I wish everybody to be happy."

"But you will never be anything," answered his mother, with a sigh. "Look at your brothers—they will make their fortunes."

Pascal laughed half-sadly, for he saw that his mother simply reproached him for not being shrewd enough to speculate in the political situation. He turned the conversation then, but Félicité was never able to induce him to evince any interest or take any decided position.

Eighteen hundred and fifty-one was a year of great anxiety in the political world of Plassans. The most contradictory news arrived from Paris. Sometimes the Republicans were in the ascendancy, and in the next breath it was the Conservative party.

The echoes of the quarrels which convulsed the Legislative Assembly reached the Provinces one morning, grew to alarming proportions before night, and the next day faded away. The general feeling was, however, that the dénouement was near at hand. The people were so sick with suspense and uncertainty that they would have thrown themselves into the arms of the Grand Turk, if the Grand Turk could have saved France from anarchy.

The Marquis smiled still. One night he leaned over Félicité's chair and whispered:

"Little one, the fruit is ripe; now is your time to be useful."

Félicité, who read Eugène's letters regularly, understood him at once; but what was she to do to be useful? She asked the Marquis:

"All depends on events," he replied. "If the Department remains calm, if some insurrection does not disturb Plassans, there will be nothing especial for you to do. If, on the contrary, the people rise, there will be a

magnificent rôle all ready for you. Your husband is a little dull—”

“Oh!” interrupted Félicité, “I will undertake to quicken his faculties. But do you think the Department will revolt?”

“Undoubtedly it will! Plassans will not move; but the neighboring towns have been mined and countermined by secret societies, and belong to the advanced Republicans. If a coup d’état takes place, the tocsin will be heard throughout the whole district.”

Félicité reflected a moment.

“Do you mean,” she asked, “that you consider an insurrection necessary to assure our fortunes?”

“That is just what I think,” answered the Marquis, with a sarcastic smile. “A new dynasty is not founded except in an uproar. Blood is a capital fertilizer. Besides, the Rougons, like other illustrious families, ought to date from a massacre!”

These words, accompanied by a sneer, caused a cold shiver to run down his hearer’s back. But she had considerable brains, and the superb curtains in Monsieur Pierotte’s windows, at which she religiously gazed each morning, sustained her courage. When she felt it waver, she went to the window and contemplated the Receiver’s house. She made up her mind to the most desperate acts rather than be checked on the threshold of the land of which she had so long dreamed.

The conversation with the Marquis was followed by the reading of a letter from Eugène, who also seemed to be

looking forward to an insurrection. The dénouement was indeed near at hand. In November it was rumored that the Prince President wished to be called Emperor.

"We will call him whatever he pleases," cried Granoux, "provided he has these rascally Republicans shot!"

This exclamation from Granoux, who was supposed to be asleep, excited much emotion. The Marquis pretended not to hear it, but the others all applauded.

Rondier now declared himself, and while watching the Marquis out of the corners of his eye, said that France ought to be governed with a strong hand, and that it was of little consequence whose the hand might be.

The Marquis did not speak; but Commandant Secardot rose.

"My friends," he said, "only a Napoleon can protect the persons and the property which to-day are menaced. Do not be troubled. I have taken all necessary precautions that order shall reign here."

The Commandant had, in fact, assisted by Rougon, concealed in a stable near the ramparts a supply of arms, and was assured of the fidelity of the National Guards. His words produced a happy effect, and that evening, when the yellow salon broke up, there was much jaunty talk of massacring the Reds if they dared to lift a finger.

On December 1st, Pierre received a letter from Eugène, which, as usual, he read in private. From its perusal he emerged with an agitated face. Félicité saw this and could hardly wait for night and her husband to be asleep.

At last she was able to take the key from his pocket, and had the letter in her hands. Eugène wrote that the hour had come when he had best inform his mother of the impending crisis.

Félicité waited all the next day for a conference which did not come. She dared not show any curiosity, and continued to feign ignorance, though inwardly raging against the silly distrust of her husband, who apparently thought her as foolish as the majority of women. Pierre, with that marital pride which imparts to a man the belief in his own superiority, had come to believe that his wife was altogether to blame for all the ill luck that had been theirs. He fancied he was conducting the present affair all by himself, and that therefore, all was going smoothly. He therefore decided to confide nothing to his wife, notwithstanding his son's advice.

Félicité was excessively angry, and determined on some quiet revenge.

"If he would only commit some great folly," she thought, "and come to me for advice. Then I should triumph indeed!"

She was much disturbed at the idea that should Pierre succeed without her aid, he would always claim to be her superior. She had married this peasant's son, in preference to some notary's clerk, with the intention of using him like a puppet, pulling the strings as seemed to her good. And now the puppet, heavy and blind, dreamed of walking alone! This the little old lady protested against with every fibre of her active little body. She knew Pierre to

be obstinate and brutal; she knew of the receipt he had compelled his mother to sign; but she nevertheless felt that the present circumstances were most critical, and asked for something more than decision.

The official intelligence of the coup d'état reached Plassans on the afternoon of December 5th. The yellow salon was crowded that night. Although the crisis had been impatiently anticipated, every face betrayed great uneasiness. Pierre himself was very pale as he attempted to excuse the conduct of Prince Louis before the Legitimists and Orleanists assembled.

"There is some talk of an appeal to the people," he said, "and the nation will be free to choose the government which is most acceptable to them. The President will withdraw before our legitimate masters."

The Marquis smiled lightly. Rondier cried out roughly—

"This is no time for talking. We must act, and at once organize our plans to maintain order."

These good people all stood in terrible fear of the Republicans. The bulletins from Paris had been affixed to the door of the Sous-Préfecture, and almost immediately the rumor ran through the crowd that several hundred men had left their work and were organizing.

About nine o'clock Granoux arrived, hot from a Municipal council hurriedly convoked. In a voice choked by emotion, he said that the Mayor had decided on the most energetic measures to preserve order. But this intelligence was of minor consequence to that which he next gave,

namely, that the Sub-Prefect had been removed. This functionary had absolutely refused to communicate to the inhabitants of Plassans the despatches from the Minister of the Interior. He was the only Sub-Prefect in all France who had the courage to express these Democratic opinions.

The Rougon faction chuckled over the defeat of the Sub-Prefect, which left them greater liberty of action than they had ventured to hope for. It was promptly decided that the yellow salon should accept the coup d'état, and declare themselves in favor of the *faits accomplis*. Vuillet was bidden to write an article to this effect at once, which should be published in the Gazette the next day. Neither he nor the Marquis made any objection. They had probably received their instructions from the mysterious persons to whom they so often made allusion. The clergy and nobility united with the conquerors to crush their common enemy, the Republic.

Aristide, this same evening, was in a state of breathless anxiety similar to that felt by a gambler, who risks his last louis at cards. The dismissal of his chief that day had given him time for reflection. He wrote an article in the meantime, and then went out to walk, hoping to cool the fever of his brain.

He glanced up at the Rougon windows, and found them brilliantly lighted.

"What are they plotting there?" he said to himself, burning with curiosity to know what the yellow salon thought of recent events. He did not, as a general thing,

attach much importance to the opinion of these people, but he was now in a state of mind when he would have taken the advice of a child four years old. He did not dare appear in his father's rooms just then, and yet he quietly mounted the stairs, wondering at the same time what would be thought of him if by any chance he should be surprised.

He reached the door and heard a confused murmur of voices.

"I am a perfect fool," he said; and turned to go down. But at that moment he heard his mother's voice—she was showing some one out. He had only time to turn into a recess where a narrow flight of stairs ran to the roof.

The door opened; the Marquis appeared.

"Ah! my child," he said, as the two stood for a moment. "These people are more cowardly than I supposed. With such men as these, poor France will be always at the mercy of whomsoever dares to take her!"

He added, bitterly, as if talking to himself.

"Monarchy is decidedly too honest for modern times. Its day is over."

"Eugene forewarned his father," Félicité answered. "The triumph of Prince Louis is certain."

"Oh, you can move boldly now," replied the Marquis, as he went down the stairs. "In two or three days France will be strangled. Good-night, little one!"

Félicité closed the door. Aristide was stunned. He rushed down the street to the printing office. He felt that he was the dupe of his family, wilfully kept in the dark

by them. He was especially exasperated against his father whom he believed to be a Legitimist, and who turned out a Bonapartist at the right moment.

"They have allowed me to commit a goodly amount of follies," he muttered.

He rushed into the newspaper office and demanded his article. It was in type. He broke up the form, and was not satisfied until he had rattled the letters altogether, as if they had been dominos. The editor looked at him in amazement, but in his heart he was overjoyed at this incident, as the article struck him as being dangerous. But he was out of matter.

"You must give me something else," he said.

"Of course," answered Aristide, snatching up a pen. He wrote a warm panegyric of the coup d'état, and in the first line declared that Prince Louis had come to save the Republic. After writing a page he held his pen uplifted. His sharp face was much disturbed.

"I must go home first," he exclaimed. "I will send this article to you in an hour. You need not issue the paper quite so early as usual; it will make no especial difference."

He walked slowly home, deep in thought. He was again a prey to indecision. Eugène was clever, to be sure, but had not his mother exaggerated some simple phrase of his? Would it not be better to wait a while?

An hour elapsed. Angèle rushed into the editor's office.

"My husband has just been terribly hurt," she cried.

His fingers have been crushed in a door, and he was only able to dictate this little paragraph, which he begs you to publish in to-morrow's paper."

The next day the *Independent* appeared with the following lines at the head of the first column :

"A most unfortunate accident to our valued contributor, Monsieur Aristide Rougon, will deprive us, we fear, of his articles for some little time. The gravity of existing circumstances makes this silence on his part peculiarly difficult for him and for ourselves. But no one of our readers will doubt for a moment that his patriotism desires only the happiness of France."

This unintelligible nonsense had been most carefully studied. The last phrase each party could read according to its wishes. The next day Aristide showed himself with his arm in a sling.

His mother, startled by the card in the journal, rushed to his house. He refused to show her his hand, and spoke with a bitterness that enlightened the old lady.

"It will be nothing," she said, quite reassured, and concealing a smile. "You only need repose."

It was undoubtedly on account of this pretended accident and the departure of the Sub-Prefect, that the *Independent* was not molested, like most, or indeed all of the Democratic journals in the Department.

The following day was comparatively quiet. Toward evening there was a popular manifestation, quickly dispersed by the police. Some workmen came to ask the Mayor for the despatches from Paris; their application was

refused haughtily. As they departed they cried out: "Vive la Republique! Vive la Constitution!" but this was all, and the yellow salon smiled complacently.

But the 5th and 6th were more disturbed. The news came of insurrections in all the neighboring towns, and the yellow salon was not quite so comfortable. They began to think that even if Plassans did not break out into open revolt, it could be isolated from all communication with the outside world, and some one said that blood had been shed in Marseilles, and another that a terrible revolution had burst out in Paris.

On the 7th the yellow salon was in a state of great excitement, its inmates were white with terror, who talked in low voices, as if in a chamber of Death. Intelligence had come that three thousand rebels had assembled at Amboise, not more than three leagues off. A band of Republicans in Plassans had gone to join them, and had marched out of the Roman gate singing *La Marseillaise*, and breaking windows as they went.

The Commandant had despatched his valet to discover the exact route taken by the insurgents, and the yellow salon was impatiently awaiting the return of this man. The circle was complete; every one of the habitués of the Rougon Salon was there. Rondier and Granoux lay back in their chairs, groaning and sighing.

Vuillet, quite calm to all appearance, was deliberating as to what he had best do in order to preserve his property and his life. He hesitated between his barn and his cellar, but rather inclined to the cellar. Pierre and the

Commandant marched up and down the room, occasionally exchanging a word or two. The Marquis, as carefully dressed and as smiling as ever, talked in a corner with Félicité, and seemed in the best of spirits.

There was a ring at the door-bell. These gentlemen started as if they had heard a discharge of musketry. While Félicité went to open the door, a profound silence reigned in the room.

The Commandant's servant presently appeared all out of breath, and said, hastily, to his master :

"Sir, the Insurgents will be here in an hour."

This was a thunder-clap ; every one started to his feet. They each and all plied the man with questions.

"Zound !" cried the Commandant, "do have more sense, and keep quiet."

The messenger went on to say that he had seen the column at Tulettes, and had turned back as quickly as possible.

"There are three thousand at the very least ; they march like soldiers in battalions, and I think I saw prisoners among them."

"Prisoners !" exclaimed his hearers, sick with terror.

"Of course," interrupted the Marquis, in his flute-like tones. "I was told that the Insurgents arrested persons known for their conservative opinions."

This was too much for the yellow salon, some of whose inmates arose and stealthily gained the door, evidently with the idea that they had no time to lose in gaining a place of concealment.

Félicité took the Marquis aside.

"What do these men do with the people they arrest?" she asked.

"They regard them as hostages," was the reply.

Félicité made no reply, but watched the panic in her room with a faint smile. One by one the bourgeois departed.

"Coward!" muttered the Commandant between his teeth. "For two mortal years these poltroons have talked of shooting down the Republicans, and to-day they would not dare pull the trigger of a child's toy." He took up his hat.

"Come, Rougon," he said, "there is no time to lose."

Félicité seemed to have been waiting for this moment. She threw herself between her husband and the door, and implored him not to follow this terrible Commandant.

"You shall not leave me!" she cried; "these wretches will kill you!" and she feigned the most overwhelming despair.

The Commandant began to swear.

"Upon my life, this is a little too much!" he cried. "Come on, Rougon."

"No! no!" exclaimed the old lady, "he shall not go with you."

The Marquis looked at Félicité with considerable curiosity. What was the meaning of this farce she was playing? Was this the woman who had just been talking so gayly with him?

Pierre, whose arm was held by his wife, struggled slightly.

"You shall not go!" repeated Félicité, turning to the Commandant:

"How can you think of resistance?" she cried. "They are three thousand strong, and you can't get together one hundred men. You are throwing your lives away."

"What of that!" answered the Commandant, impatiently. "It is our duty all the same."

Félicité burst into wild sobs. "If they do not kill him," she said with her eyes fixed on her husband, "they will take him prisoner, and what will become of me?"

"But do you imagine," answered the Commandant, "that he runs no risk if the Insurgents are permitted to enter the town quietly? In less than an hour the Mayor, all the officials, and your husband, too, would be lodged in prison!"

The Marquis detected a faint smile on Félicité's lips

"Do you really believe that?" she asked.

"I do, indeed. The Republicans are not quite so dull as to leave their enemies behind them. To-morrow Plassans' officials and her best citizens will be no longer here."

At these words which she had so skilfully elicited, Félicité dropped her husband's arm. Pierre had apparently relinquished all idea of going out. Thanks to his wife, whose able tactics he did not grasp, and whose secret complicity he did not suspect, he saw his line of conduct clearly marked out before him.

"My wife is right," he said; "we are forgetting our families."

The Commandant banged his hat down upon his head, and said in a most decided tone :

"Right or wrong, I am Commandant of the National Guard. I ought to be at the Mayor's office. Acknowledge that you are afraid, and I will say good-night to you."

He turned the handle of the door. Rougon held his arm.

"Listen to me, Secardot," he said, and he drew the Commandant aside, and explained to him in a low voice, that in his opinion, some energetic men should be left in the town to preserve order, and offered to put himself at the head of the reserve.

"Give me," said Rougon, "the key of the room where the arms and munitions are stored, and tell fifty of your men not to stir hand or finger without orders from me."

Secardot consented finally to these prudent measures, and handed him the key.

During this conversation the Marquis murmured a few complimentary words into the ear of Félicité. This Coup de Théâtre had awakened his admiration. The woman smiled, and as the Commandant left the room, she said, "You are really going?"

"One of Napoleon's old soldiers," he replied, "is not likely to allow himself to be intimidated by the rabble."

Félicité turned to the Marquis and murmured in his ear :

"I wish to Heavens that this Commandant could be arrested. He is altogether too zealous."

Rougon returned to the salon, where Granoux and

Rondier still sat in their respective arm-chairs, stunned and bewildered.

"Now," said Pierre, "that we are alone, I propose to you that we shall hide ourselves, and avoid a certain arrest."

His hearers were quite ready to embrace him.

"I shall have need of you very soon, gentlemen," said Rougon, pompously. "To us will belong the honor of restoring order to Plassans."

"You may rely on us," cried Vuillet, with an enthusiasm that disturbed Félicité.

Time pressed. These remarkable defenders of Plassans, by way of protecting the town, and restoring it to its normal condition of quiet, now hurried to find some place of concealment. When Pierre was alone with his wife he bade her not commit the blunder of barricading herself, but to open the door when any one knocked, and in answer to any inquiries for him, she could say that he had gone on a short journey. She pretended to be frightened out of her wits, and asked what was going to become of them. He answered harshly :

"Never mind. Let me manage our affairs. They are going very well."

A few minutes later he was hurrying through the streets. He saw a body of Insurgents marching, and singing the Marseillaise.

"Yes," he muttered, "it is time. The town is in a state of insurrection already."

He went at once to the Roman gate, and was covered

with cold perspiration, while the man slowly swung it open.

After a step or two on the road, he saw in the yellow moonlight, at the other end of the Faubourg, the glitter of the fire-arms of the Insurgents. It was with hurrying feet that he reached his mother's house in Saint-Mittre, where he had not been for years.

CHAPTER IV.

INSULTS AND WOUNDS.

ANTOINE MACQUART returned to Paris after Napoleon's fall. He was in none of the last and bloody battles of the Empire. He had been simply dragged from one place to another, and lived the uneventful barrack-life of a soldier. His indolence was deeply rooted, and his drunkenness gained him innumerable punishments, to which he was utterly indifferent; saying to his comrades,

"I have money, and when I have served my time, I can live in comfort and idleness."

This belief and his stupid ignorance prevented his ever reaching the grade of corporal. He had not returned to Plassans even for a single day since his departure, for his elder brother had invented a thousand pretexts to keep him away. He was, therefore, in complete ignorance of the manner in which Pierre had disposed of their mother's fortune. Adelaide, in the utter indifference in which she lived, had written to him only three times, and had then contented herself with saying that she was well. The silence which followed his demands for money did not arouse his suspicions. His knowledge of Pierre's stinginess was sufficient to explain the difficulty which he had in obtaining from him an occasional piece of twenty francs. His animosity against his brother, who had, contrary to his

promise, permitted him to remain in the service, increased with each year.

He swore to himself that, on his return, he would no longer obey like a little boy, but would claim his share of his mother's property and live at ease.

The tumbling down of his castles in the air was something terrible. When he reached the Faubourg and saw that the very landmarks of the Fonque property had vanished, he was literally stunned. He inquired for his mother's address, and when he found her, a frightful scene followed. Adelaide calmly informed him of the sale of her property. He flew into a violent rage and shook her angrily, but the poor woman only replied:

"Your brother has everything. He will look out for you—never fear."

He at last left his mother and went to Pierre, to whom he had written, and found him prepared to receive him, and to quarrel on the smallest pretext.

"Listen to me," said the oil merchant. "If you insult me, I will put you out of the door. What are you to me? We do not even bear the same name. It is unfortunate enough that my mother should have misconducted herself as she did, without her illegitimate children coming here to abuse me! I was well disposed toward you, but since your present insolence I will not do the smallest thing for you."

Antoine was half choked with rage.

"And my money, Thief! Will you give that back to me? Or must I drag you before the courts?"

Pierre shrugged his shoulders.

"I have none of your money," he said, calmly. "My mother disposed of her fortune precisely as she chose. I have never meddled in her affairs, or tried to ferret out what she has done with her money. I have voluntarily renounced all claims to her estate, and am far above any of your vile accusations."

And as his brother raved—more and more exasperated by this coolness—he laid before his eyes the receipt signed by Adelaide. The sight of this paper overwhelmed Antoine.

"It is well," he said, almost calmly. "I know now what to do."

The truth was, however, that he was utterly at a loss to know in what direction to turn. His sense of powerlessness aggravated his rage. He returned to his mother, and asked her a thousand questions. She, poor woman, could do nothing but send him back to Pierre.

"Do you think," he cried, insolently, "that I have nothing better to do than to dance between you and him? I shall soon find out who has the money, unless you and some rascal of a man have gotten rid of it."

He then went on to speak of his father, who he said was always tipsy, and had crunched up everything before his death, and left his children without a sou. The poor woman listened with a stupefied look. Tears ran down her cheeks. She defended herself with the terror of a child, replying to her son's questions as if she had been standing before a judge. She assured him that she had

not a sou with such perseverance that Antoine ended by believing her.

He slept at his mother's on a mattress thrown in a corner. He had returned with empty pockets, and was the more exasperated to see his brother prosperous, while he was left to roam the streets like a dog without a master. As he had no money to buy civilian's clothes, he went out the next day in his army pantaloons and kepi, wearing, too, a brown velvet coat, which had belonged to Macquart. In this most singular costume he ran to the authorities and made his complaint.

He was received with a contempt which brought angry tears to his eyes. In the country people are especially severe toward fallen families. Pierre, moreover, had begun to wash himself clean from the original stain. His rascality was laughed at. It was said he had done well for himself, and if he had got possession of the whole property, that it would be a good lesson for the profligates of the town.

Antoine went back discouraged. One lawyer had bidden him wash his dirty linen in private; but the lawyer, before giving this advice, had adroitly managed to find out that he had not money enough to carry on his suit. According to this man the affair would be a long one, and his success more than doubtful.

That evening Antoine was harder than ever towards his mother. He renewed his accusations and his threats. He kept the poor woman until midnight, shivering with shame and fright. Adelaide told him that Pierre paid her an annuity, which made him all the more certain that his

brother had pocketed the fifty thousand francs. But in his irritation he pretended to doubt, and continued to interrogate her with a suspicious air.

"No; I am quite sure my father was not the only one," he said, coarsely.

At these words she threw herself on an old chest, and spent the night in tears.

Antoine saw that it was impossible for him to carry on a contest, unsupported, against his brother. He tried at first to interest Adelaide in his behalf, for an accusation brought by her would have great weight. But the poor woman, gentle as she was, refused to do this.

"I am most unfortunate," she said, "and you are right to be angry with me; but I can never do anything to injure one of my children. No; I should prefer that you should beat me."

He saw that it was useless for him to insist, and he contented himself by saying that she was justly punished, and that he did not pity her in the least. That evening Adelaide had one of those nervous attacks, in which she lay for hours, with eyes wide open, stiff and cold as if dead. The young man threw himself on his mattress, then started up and deliberately searched the house to ascertain if there were no small hoards hidden anywhere. He found about forty francs. He stole them, and while his mother lay unconscious, left the house and took the Diligence for Marseilles.

He hoped that Mouret, the hatter, who had married his sister Ursule, would, indignant at Pierre's rascality, defend

his wife's interests. But he did not find matters as he hoped. Mouret said frankly that he had always regarded Ursule as an orphan, and that he would not, on any account, have any disagreement with her family. Antoine, received thus coldly, did not linger long, but before leaving he determined to avenge himself for the contempt which he read in the eyes of his brother-in-law.

"Take care; my sister has always been very delicate, and I find her much changed. You will probably lose her before long."

The tears which filled Mouret's eyes proved that he had touched an open wound with a rough hand.

When he got back to Plassans, Antoine felt even more than before that his hands were tied, and this certainty made him fiercer than before. For a month he wandered about, telling his story to whomsoever would listen to him. When he had obtained a few sous from his mother, he went to the nearest wine-shop, and there sat and abused his brother. The sweet fraternity existing between drunken men insured him a sympathetic audience. All the vagrants in the town espoused his quarrel, and talked vociferously of that rascal Rougon, who allowed a brave soldier to be penniless and without a crust of bread. The séance generally terminated in a denunciation of all rich people.

Antoine, with a sharp eye to vengeance, continued to walk about in his old pantaloons and his kepi, although his mother offered to buy him more suitable garments. He flourished his rags in the eyes of all the

little world at Plassans—on Sundays even more than on other days.

One of his keenest enjoyments was to pass Pierre's shop twenty times daily. He made the holes in his coat larger with his fingers, and often stopped before the door to chat with some of his boon companions, who were generally quite as tipsy as himself. He would narrate, in the loudest voice, the robbery of fifty thousand francs, and his words penetrated the most remote corner of the Rougon establishment.

"Upon my word," said Félicité, in despair, "he will drive us to sell the house!"

The vain little woman suffered terribly at this time. She even regretted having married Rougon, who had such a terrible family. She would have given worlds to have found some way to induce Antoine to parade his rags elsewhere. But when she proposed to her husband to give him a little money, and induce him to leave, Pierre would say angrily:

"No! not one sou! Let him starve, and die in the gutter!"

But at last he in his turn admitted that Antoine's conduct was unendurable. One day Félicité determined to bring the matter to a conclusion, and called to "that man," by which disdainful term she designated Antoine. He was with a companion, quite as tipsy as himself.

"Who is shouting to us?" cried Antoine, sulkily. Félicité drew back a little.

"It is to you alone that I wish to speak," she said.

"Nonsense!" answered Antoine, "this is a good friend of mine, and he can hear all you have to say. He is my witness."

The witness dropped heavily into a chair, and looked about him with the stupid smile of tipsy men, who are determined to be insolent.

Félicité stood in front of the door, ashamed that any one should look in and see the singular guests she received. Fortunately, her husband came to her aid, and a violent quarrel ensued between him and his brother, whose thick tongue repeated over and over again the same insulting epithets. He finally began to weep, and his emotion so touched his comrade that he too felt called upon to burst into tears.

Pierre was quite dignified.

"You are certainly unfortunate," he said, "and I really pity you. You have cruelly insulted me, but I cannot forget that we have the same mother. If I give you anything, however, you must understand that I do it from kindness, and not from fear. Do you want a hundred francs?"

This sudden offer dazzled Antoine's companion, who looked at him with an expression which signified,

"If he offered you one hundred francs, you had better take them and treat him civilly."

But Antoine was not so easily contented. He asked his brother if he was laughing at him.

"No, he would have his share, ten thousand francs—not a penny less!"

"You are wrong," stammered his friend.

Pierre lost his patience, and threatened to pitch both the friends out of the window. Then Antoine reduced his claim to one thousand francs. They quarrelled for a full hour, when Félicité interfered, for a crowd was gathering about the shop.

"Look here," she said, hastily. "My husband will give you two hundred francs. I will buy you a complete suit of clothes, and will hire you a lodging for one year."

Rougon shook his head angrily, but Antoine's companion shouted, enthusiastically,

"Done! My friend agrees."

Antoine said, in a sulky tone, that he accepted the offer, for he felt that he would obtain no more. It was agreed that the money and the clothing should be sent the next day, and that Félicité should look for a lodging for him at once.

A week later, Antoine was installed in a large and commodious room in the Old Quartier, where Félicité—on an assurance from him that he would not disturb them further—had been better than her promise, and had put in a bed, a table, and chairs.

Adelaide saw her son depart without any regret, for she had been condemned to bread and water for the three months he had lived with her. Antoine quickly drank up the two hundred francs given him by Rougon. He never once thought of investing them in some little business by which he could live. When he was again without a sou he made another application to Rougon. But Pierre

quietly bade him take himself off, and forbade him ever to cross his threshold again. Antoine repeated his accusations as loudly as before, but the town, who had been kept informed by Félicité of all that had taken place, were much impressed with their generosity, and treated him as a ne'er-do-well who was a sore trial to his family.

In the meantime Antoine, sore pressed by famine, threatened to become a smuggler like his father. The Rougons shrugged their shoulders; they knew him to be altogether too cowardly to risk his skin.

Finally, full of rage against his connections and against the whole civilized world, Antoine determined to look for work.

He had made the acquaintance of a basket maker, and offered to assist him. In a very little time he had learned to braid baskets, of a coarse texture, which sold readily at a very low price.

After a time he worked on his own account. He liked this employment, for he could take it up when he pleased. He could lounge for several days, and when he was penniless would hurriedly make a dozen baskets, and sell them at market. He never took up his osier slips without a sullen curse directed against the rich, who lived without doing anything.

The trade of a basket maker is not especially lucrative, and he could not have made money enough by it to provide for his low tastes, had he not discovered a way of obtaining his osier without expense.

He pretended he bought it more cheaply than he could

at Plassans, in a neighboring town, but the truth was that he stole it on dark nights from the osier plantations on the Viorne. He was discovered once, and spent several days in prison. From that time he became a furious Republican. He declared that he was smoking his pipe calmly on the bank of the river when the guard arrested him.

"They want to get rid of me because they know what my opinions are. But I do not fear these rich people; no, not I!"

After ten years of this thriftless idleness Antoine Macquart decided that he worked too hard. His one dream was to find some way of living where he would not be compelled to work. He was not content with bread and water, like some persons who are willing to be hungry, provided they can fold their arms. He seriously thought of applying for a situation as servant with some nobleman in the Quartier Saint-Marc. But one of his friends, who was employed as a groom, told him such a tale of his deprivations, and of the exacting claims of masters, that Macquart, seeing the time was near at hand when he must buy his osier, determined to sell himself as a substitute, and resume his life as a soldier, which he preferred a thousand times over to that of a workman.

At this time he made the acquaintance of a woman, which modified all his plans.

Josephine Gavaudau, known throughout the town under the familiar diminutive of Fine, was a tall, stout creature of about thirty. Her square face was as large as a man's,

and on her chin and upper lip were several long hairs. She was said to have the most extraordinary strength, which reputation, as well as her broad shoulders, inspired the street boys with such marvellous respect that they dared not laugh at her moustache.

With this stout frame Fifine's voice was very tiny—that of a little child, clear and flute-like. Those persons who knew her best declared that, notwithstanding her terrible air, she was as mild as a lamb. She was hard-working, and could have saved money had she not loved drink.

Anisette was her especial adoration, and on Sunday evenings she was often carried home. All the week through she worked like a dog in several ways. She sold fruit and roasted chestnuts in their season, scrubbed and washed dishes, and at leisure moments mended straw chairs. It was in this way that she was so well known, for in the South, straw chairs are almost universal.

Antoine Macquart made the acquaintance of Fine at market. When he went there to sell his baskets in winter, he generally stood to keep warm by the side of her furnace. He was struck by her courage and her perseverance first, and then by degrees, under her rough husk, discovered her real timidity and goodness of heart.

He often saw her give handfuls of chestnuts to the ragged imps who stood longingly before her smoking wares. At other times, when the Inspector of the Market was rude, she wept big tears like a child. Antoine finally decided that this was the sort of wife he needed. She would work for them both, and he would rule. She could be his

beast of burtnen—indefatigable and obedient. As to her love of drink, he thought it only quite natural.

Having duly weighed all the advantages of this union, he declared himself. Never had any man before proposed marriage to her. In vain did her friends tell her that Antoine was the worst of scamps; she was not courageous enough to refuse him.

They were married, and Antoine took up his residence in his wife's apartment in La Rue Cévadière, near the Market. This apartment consisted of three rooms much more comfortably furnished than his own, and it was with a sigh of supreme content that he stretched himself on the two excellent mattresses which adorned the bed. All went well at first. Fine neglected none of her numerous tasks. Antoine braided more baskets in a week than he had ever done in a month before. But on Sunday war was declared. They had a round sum of money in the house, and that night they were both tipsy, and fought like tigers, while the next day it was impossible for either to remember how the quarrel had begun. They had begun the evening pleasantly enough; some trifle exasperated Antoine, who gave her a cuff, which she returned. The next day she went to work as usual, as if nothing had happened; but her husband was sulky, rose late, and spent the whole day in the open air, smoking his pipe in the sunshine.

From this time the life of these people was clearly marked out. It was tacitly understood between them that the wife would sweat blood and water to support her husband. Fine, who loved to work, made no objection.

Her patience, when she had not been drinking, was something angelic, and she did not seem to think it strange that her man was so lazy, and that he should shirk the smallest duties. Her darling sin, Anisette, opened her eyes apparently, and on the evenings when she had forgotten herself, before a bottle of her favorite liquor, she was quite ready for a quarrel, if Antoine began one, and would fall on him tooth and nail, reproaching him for his ingratitude and indolence. The neighbors became habituated to the noise in their rooms, where the husband and wife fought and drank by turns.

"Some day," said Fine, to her brutal master, "you will break my arm or my leg; and then who will work for you?"

Antoine was by no means dissatisfied with his new life. He was well clothed, eat when he was hungry, and drank when he was thirsty. He laid aside his basket-making entirely, promising himself vaguely to braid a few soon. He kept under his bed a bundle of osier for twenty years.

The Macquarts had three children, two daughters and a son.

Lisa, the eldest, was born a year after the marriage of their parents. She was a healthy, handsome child, very like her mother, but never showed a tithe of her energy and industry. She inherited from her father a love of ease and a certain indolence, and as a child would work all day for a cake. When she was seven, a neighbor took a great fancy to her, as a little servant, and when this woman

lost her husband in 1859, and she went to Paris to live, she took Lisa with her—her parents had, as it were, given her the child.

The second daughter, Gervaise, was lame from her birth. Conceived in drunkenness, her twisted thigh was a strange reproduction of the brutality which her mother had been compelled to endure.

Gervaise was very delicate, and Fine, seeing her always pale and feeble, put her on a régime of Anisette, under pretext that she needed strengthening. Gervaise grew up tall and slender, always wearing dresses that were much too large, and floated loosely about her. Her face was very delicate and sweet, while her infirmity was almost a grace.

The son, Jean, was born three years later. A strong, hardy fellow, as like his mother in character as he was unlike her physically. He grew up with the determination to create for himself some day an independent position. He went regularly to school, and studied hard to acquire a little arithmetic and orthography; but his mental faculties were so slow in operation, that it took him a day to learn what others would acquire in an hour.

As long as these children lived at home, Antoine grumbled at the useless mouths who devoured his wife's earnings. He swore never to have another child, declaring that his wife always gave the best in the house to the children.

Each pair of shoes and each new garment Fine bought for them caused him to sulk for forty-eight hours. He

thought it outrageous that, for the sake of these children, he should be compelled to smoke four sous tobacco, and to dine on potatoes which he detested utterly.

Later, when Jean and Gervaise began to earn something, he was more kindly disposed toward them. Lisa had gone. He accepted the earnings of the children without the smallest compunction, for had he not done the same by their mother? When Gervaise was eight years old, she went to a merchant near by to crack almonds. She was paid ten sous per day, which her father regularly pocketed, and Fine never dared ask what became of the money. When the girl was apprenticed to a fine laundress and finally received two francs per day, the two francs were swallowed up in the same way. Jean, who was with a cabinet-maker, was robbed in the same way by Macquart, who intercepted him before the boy could take his money to his mother. If by any chance this slipped through the father's fingers, which sometimes happened, Antoine was in a terrible state of mind, and for a week would watch wife and children with the most ferocious aspect, ready to quarrel on the smallest provocation, but not having quite audacity enough to acknowledge the cause of his irritation.

Gervaise grew up in the street with the boys of the neighborhood, and at fifteen bore a child, the father of which was a workman named Lantier. Macquart was furious, but when he found that Lantier's mother, a good woman, was ready to take the child, he calmed down again. But he took care to say nothing of Lantier's

marrying Gervaise, for his daughter made considerable money. Four years later she had a second son, whom Lantier's mother also took. Macquart closed his eyes this time, and seemed to see nothing.

This epoch was the best in Antoine Macquart's life. He was dressed like a tradesman, with a coat and pantaloons of fine cloth. He was clean and well shorn, and not in the least like the ragged fellow who formerly frequented the wine shops. He read the newspapers at the Cafés, and walked on the parade ground with the fashionable world. He played the gentleman as long as he had money in his pocket. When he had none, he remained at home and reproached every one with his poverty, and, in short, made himself so utterly disagreeable, that Fine in self-protection gave him the last silver piece in the house, so that he could spend the evening at the Café. He was the very incarnation of selfishness. Gervaise brought at least sixty francs per month into the house, and wore thin calico dresses all winter, while he ordered vests of black satin from the best tailor in Plassans. Jean was despoiled with equal impudence. The Café, where his father spent entire days, was exactly opposite his master's shop, and while the lad stood with his plane or his saw near the window, he could see, on the other side of the street, "Monsieur" Macquart sugaring his coffee, or playing piquet with some petty shopkeeper. It was with the lad's money that the scamp was playing. The boy never went to the Café, for he had not even the five sous required for a *gloria*.*

* A cup of coffee or tea, with a dash of spirit in it.

Antoine treated his son as if he had been a girl: not allowing him to keep a centime, and demanding an exact account of his time and movements.

If the poor fellow allowed himself to be overpersuaded by his comrades, and spent a day in the country, his father would strike him and reproach him with the four francs he had thrown away. He thus kept his son in a state of dependence. There came to the Macquarts several friends of Gervaise—merry, laughing girls—who filled the room with youth and gayety. Poor Jean, deprived of all amusement, kept in the house by lack of means, admired these girls; but his timidity was so great that he did not dare to lay a finger upon them. Macquart shrugged his shoulders in pity.

“What an innocent!” he muttered, with an air of ironical superiority.

And it was he who kissed these girls when his wife’s back was turned. He even went further with a little laundress in whom Jean was especially interested. The old rascal piqued himself on his gallantry, and pillaged the house without the smallest sense of shame. He assumed the most superior airs, and never came in from the Café without a sneer at the poverty of his home. He said the dinner was detestable, that Gervaise was a fool and that Jean would never be a man.

Wrapped up in himself, he gayly rubbed his hands when he had eaten the best in the pantry, and then smoked his pipe, while the two children, worn out with fatigue, slept with their heads on the table. His days were empty

but happy. It seemed to him altogether natural that he should be taken care of and indulged. He also frequently narrated his amorous escapades before his son, who would listen with eager, hungry eyes. The children never rebelled, because they had always been accustomed to seeing their mother the humble servant of her husband.

Fine continued to tremble before him—although she had plenty of common sense—and allowed him to tyrannize over the household. He carried off every night all the money she earned during the day, without her daring to reproach him. Sometimes, when he had drunk in advance the money of the whole week, he reproached her as a stupid thing, who had no faculty in the management of her affairs.

Fine, with lamb-like sweetness, replied in that tiny voice which produced such a quaint effect issuing from her enormous frame, "that she was no longer young, and that money was hard to get!" As a consolation for her husband's injustice, she bought a gallon of Anisette, which she drank in the evening with her daughter, while Antoine was at the Café, and after Jean had gone to bed. The two women listened acutely, ready to hide the bottle and the glasses at the smallest sound. Sometimes Macquart would return very late, and—tipsy himself—would look at wife and daughter, with a vague smile. A bright color suffused the girl's pale, delicate face, and nothing could be more heart-breaking than the sight of this frail creature, with that drunken smile on her lips. Sometimes Jean

would be compelled to rise and separate his mother from his father, so fiercely did they quarrel, and carry his sister to her bed.

Each political party has its grotesque and unprincipled adherents. Antoine Macquart, devoured by envy and hate, longing for vengeance for fancied wrongs, desired for a Republic as an era when he could fill his pockets from his neighbor's cash-box, and even strangle that neighbor should he venture to show the smallest discontent. His constant study of the newspapers, his visits to the Café, had filled his mind with the strangest possible theories. One must have heard a wandering radical who had badly digested his reading, talk by the hour together, to have any idea of the point to which Macquart had arrived. As he talked a great deal and boasted much of having been a soldier, he was naturally surrounded by gaping hearers. Without being the chief of any party, he had gathered about him a small band of workmen who accepted his bombastic fury as honest convictions.

In February he walked about Plassans much as if the town belonged to him. He had grown insufferably insolent, and impressed his importance so strongly on the mind of the proprietor of the Café, that he did not even dare ask for the payment of a bill that had assumed formidable proportions. He drank an enormous number of "demi-tasses" about this time, occasionally invited his friends to drink with him, and orated for hours together, on the text that the people were dying of hunger, and that the rich ought to divide their hoards. This

came well from a man who never in his life had given a sou to a poor man.

He was the more impelled to fierce Republicanism from his desire to revenge himself on the Rougons. Ah! what joy would be his if some day he could hold Félicité and Pierre at his mercy! Although these last had not been over prosperous, they had become Bourgeois while he remained a working-man. This exasperated him, and to add to his mortification, one of their sons was a lawyer—another a physician, and a third an employé under government; while he, Macquart, was still a common working-man! He was also mortified at the idea that his wife should sell chestnuts in the Market, and repair all the greasy old chairs in the Quartier. Pierre was his brother—why should he be so much better off than himself? Had he not stolen his money?

“No!” he would exclaim loudly, “my brother ought to be in a convict’s cell this very day!”

This hatred increased as he saw the influence the Rougons were gradually acquiring. He called the yellow salon a nest of conspirators and vipers, who met each evening to devise plans by which they could plunder the people. He declared that his brother was not so poor as he pretended, and that he hid his wealth because he was afraid of robbers. He concealed his personal enmity under the veil of the purest patriotism.

Félicité would gladly have silenced Macquart with money, if she could have done so; but, alas! money was not over-plentiful with her. Antoine was a constant

mortification and reproach to her. She felt that all her new friends scorned her for being allied to such a man, and she asked herself, with increasing agony, how she could ever wash away this stain. She trembled for the success of their plans, which this man could frustrate at pleasure.

Antoine did his best to exasperate and annoy these people. At the Café he spoke of Pierre as "his brother;"—in the street, if he chanced to meet one of the frequenters of the yellow salon, he would utter such opprobrious epithets that the victim, horrified at this audacity, would repeat them the same night to the Rougons with the air of holding them accountable for the insult.

One evening Granoux came in, utterly furious.

"Upon my word," he cried, "this is too much!" and turning to Pierre he added:

"A man with a brother like yours should find some way of suppressing him. I was crossing the square quietly when the fellow passed me and uttered a few words under his breath. I distinctly heard him say 'old rascal!'"

Félicité sought to soothe the perturbed spirits of her guest, but all in vain. The Marquis came to her assistance.

"It is certainly very strange," he said. "Why should this person have called you old rascal? Are you certain the insult was addressed to you?"

Granoux looked puzzled, and finally it was decided that Antoine had said:

"You are going to that old rascal's."

The Marquis caressed his chin, with a sly smile, and Rougon said, coolly:

"To be sure, I was the person of whom he spoke. I am thankful that it is explained, and I have only to beg, gentlemen, that you will avoid this person with the greatest care. I have long since renounced him formally."

But Félicité did not take things quite so coolly. Each one of Macquart's outbreaks made her perfectly ill.

Some months before the Coup d'État the Rougons received an anonymous letter—three pages of coarse accusations and insults. This letter threatened, that if his party triumphed, the whole story of the disgraceful loves of Adelaide, and the theft committed by Pierre, in compelling her to sign a receipt of fifty thousand francs, should be published in the morning journals. This letter was a great blow to Rougon, while Félicité could not refrain from a few sarcastic words in regard to his family.

"We must at all costs get rid of this fellow," said Pierre, gloomily, for he was quite sure that the letter was Antoine's handiwork.

In the meantime Antoine had counted on making an accomplice of Aristide, but the young man, although blinded by rage and jealousy, was not quite foolish enough to make common cause with a man like his uncle, and kept him at a distance. Macquart, therefore, had only the children of his sister Ursule to whom to turn.

Ursule herself had died in 1859, thus fulfilling her brother's sinister prophecy. The nervous attack of her mother had developed in her in the form of slow consumption. She left three children: a daughter of eighteen, Hélène, the wife of an employé, and two boys, François,

a young man of twenty-three, and a little fellow of six, named Silvère. His wife's death, whom he adored, was to Mouret an overwhelming blow. He struggled against it for a year, indifferent to his business and daily losing the money he had made with so much difficulty. Then, one fine morning, he was found dead in a closet where Ursule's dresses still hung against the wall. His eldest son entered his Uncle Rougon's employment as clerk.

Rougon gladly received his nephew, whom he knew to be sober and hard-working. He felt the need of some person on whose fidelity he could rely. Besides, he had watched the career of this Mouret, and, learning to respect him, had come to terms with his sister. Perhaps, too, he wished to offer some compensation to François, whose mother he had robbed. While he soothed his conscience by giving employment to his nephew, he also did a very good thing for himself, for he found precisely the aid he required. If at this time the Rougon establishment was not prosperous, it was not the fault of this youth, who spent his life behind the counter, between a jar of oil and a bundle of dry cod-fish.

He was very like his mother, physically, but he inherited his father's honest but narrow mind, and was by nature regular and methodical in all his ways.

Three months after he entered his uncle's employment, his uncle, in the same spirit of compensation, gave him his daughter Marthe—his youngest daughter, of whom he did not know precisely how to dispose. The two young persons fell in love with each other. A singular

circumstance undoubtedly drew them together; they were wonderfully like each other—any one would have taken them for brother and sister.

François was singularly like his grandmother. Marthe was quite as much so, although her father, Pierre Rougon, bore not the smallest likeness to his mother; the physical likeness had overleaped the son to re-appear again in his child. But the resemblance between these young people went no further than their faces. François was the worthy son of the latter, Mouret—steady, and even a little heavy. Marthe had all the unsettled, nervous ways of her grandmother, whom she startlingly resembled. Perhaps it was this physical likeness and their mental and moral dissimilarity which attracted them toward each other.

In four years they had three children. François remained with his uncle until the latter retired, when the young man went to Marseilles to establish himself in business.

Macquart saw that it was of no use to attempt to drag into his campaign against the Rougons this hard-working youth; but he fancied he had discovered an accomplice ready to his hand in Mouret's second son, Silvère, then a boy of fifteen, who was but six when his father was found hanging among his mother's dresses. His elder brother was at a loss what to do with him, and took him to his uncle, who made a wry face on seeing him, as he had not intended to go so far with his compensations as to receive another mouth to fill.

Silvère grew up in this ungenial atmosphere, for he was

no more welcome to Félicité than to Pierre, when his grandmother, on one of her rare visits, took compassion on him, and carried him away with her. Pierre was delighted, but said nothing of increasing the allowance he made Adelaide, and which henceforth must serve for two.

Adelaide was now over seventy. She had grown old in that damp and dreary solitude, Saint-Mittre, where she lived on vegetables, and from which she did not emerge twice in the month. She looked like a nun, with her soft whiteness and automatic walk, whom the cloister has totally separated from the world.

Her pale face, always rigidly framed in a white coif, was like the face of a dying woman—a masque characterized by profound indifference. Habits of unbroken silence had made her absolutely mute. The gray shadows of her home, and the constant sight of the same objects, had softened her eyes, and given to them a crystal-like clearness.

It was a slow moral and physical death, which had transformed the half-insane and amorous girl into the grave matron. When her eyes were fixed on some distant object, looking without seeing, it was plain that behind those eyes lay a great emptiness. Nothing remained of the past but the smoothness of her skin and the slenderness of her hands, trembling with senile weakness. Her poor, worn-out frame was as frail as a dead leaf.

After Macquart's death—the man so necessary to her life—the necessity of loving had burned within her, devouring her with heat and flames; and yet she had never dreamed of yielding to her unappeased desires. A life

of shame would perhaps have left her less exhausted, than this unassuaged longing, which modified her whole organism.

Sometimes this corpse, this aged pale face, wherein seemed to be not one drop of blood, was shaken by a nervous attack, which sharpened all her faculties once more, and restored her to an intensity of life. She lay on her bed rigid, with eyes wide open, and then would be suddenly convulsed. Her strength was terrific on these occasions, and it was necessary to tie her securely, that she might not hurt her head against the wall. These attacks shook in a piteous way her poor, emaciated frame. It was as if all her youthful passions had returned and rebelled against the coldness of her years.

When she was able to totter about again, the old gossips would look at her with a sneer and say :

“The old mad woman has been drinking.”

The childish smile of little Silvère was warmth to her half-frozen form. She had asked for the child because she was weary of solitude, and trembled lest she should die alone. This child-life in the house seemed her best security against death. Without becoming in any way demonstrative, she silently devoted herself to him with ineffable tenderness.

She watched him all day long, listening with ravished ears to the insufferable noise with which he filled the whole house.

The tomb-like place reverberated when Silvère rode over it upon a stick, shouting and hallooing. She busied

herself over him with adorable awkwardness, she who, in her youth, had forgotten to be a mother, for her lover's sake, now washed and dressed this child, and guarded his frail existence with unwearying care. This love was the best and last gift, compassionate Heaven had bestowed on this crushed and weary heart, tortured for years by the keenest desires, and now dying slowly, absorbed in this affection for a child.

She had not life enough left in her to love the boy with the demonstrative affection of hearty, kind old grandmothers. Sometimes she took him on her knees and looked earnestly into his blue eyes, and when he—terrified by her pale face and steady stare—burst into sobs, she seemed to be confused and troubled, and would put him down without kissing him.

Did she think him like the smuggler Macquart?

Who can tell?

Silvère grew up in this solitude. He called Adelaide "Aunt Dide." The name of Aunt in Provence is a mere term of affection applied indiscriminately. The child loved his grandmother with a tenderness mingled with respectful terror. When he first went to her, and she had one of her nervous attacks, he would run away and hide in horror at her convulsed countenance. But later, when he was twelve years old, he watched over her courageously, preventing her from falling from the bed, and held her, sometimes for hours, tightly in his arms with the vain hope of controlling the spasms that contracted her limbs, looking all the while down upon the

piteous face and the emaciated body revealed by the clinging garments.

This ever-recurring tragedy—the old woman rigid and immovable as a corpse, the child leaning over her, watching for the return of life—was a strange and dreary sight. When Aunt Dide came to herself, she would rise with difficulty, straighten out her clothing, and move about the house. She never remembered what had taken place, and the boy from instinct never made any allusion to the painful scenes, which were, however, precisely what attached the child most strongly to his grandmother, whom he adored in the same shamefaced way in which she worshipped him. He was grateful to her for having taken him, and regarded her as a mysterious creature, the victim of some strange malady, whom he must pity and respect.

The two lived thus in a sad silence which concealed the warmest affection.

These melancholy surroundings imparted to Silvère, as he grew up, great strength of character and much enthusiasm. He was serious and contemplative; eager for instruction. He learned a little orthography and arithmetic at the Brothers' school, which he left at twelve years of age when he was apprenticed to a trade. But, as he read every volume he came across, his mental furniture was a strange mixture. He knew a great deal about many things, but he could not classify his knowledge, or arrange it so that he could get at it.

When very young he was in the habit of playing a great deal with a good-natured wheelwright, named Vian,

whose work-shop was close by. The boy would climb on the wheels of the wagons that were brought there for repair, and try to use the heavy tools which his small hands could hardly lift. One of his greatest pleasures was to help the workmen by bringing them pieces of wood which they chanced to need; and when he was older he naturally wished to become the apprentice of Vian, who had taken a great fancy to this little fellow, who had grown up, as it were, under his heels. Vian asked Adelaide to send him the boy. Silvère accepted the offer joyously, hoping that the day was not far off when he could repay to poor Aunt Dide the money she had expended for him. He became an excellent workman in a very short time.

But his ambition soared higher. He had seen at a carriage-maker's in Plassans a beautiful new calèche glittering with varnish, and said to himself that some day he would build carriages like that. This calèche remained in his mind as an ideal toward which all his aspirations rose. The wagons on which he labored at Vian's struck him as unworthy of his tenderness. He frequented the School of Design, where he made the acquaintance of a young collegian, who lent him a dilapidated treatise on Geometry. He became engrossed in this study, and spent weeks in trying to comprehend the simplest things in the world. In this way he became one of that very small number of workmen who can sign their names, and who speak familiarly of Algebra.

Nothing is so likely to unsettle and lead a mind astray

as instruction like this, built of broken reeds, without any solid foundation.

Such scraps and crumbs often give the most absolutely false ideas of the great sciences, and render those who have amassed them perfectly intolerable. But with Silvère this stolen knowledge only increased his thirst for more. He had a full appreciation of the broad horizons which were as yet closed to him, and he lived enwrapped in the most innocent adoration of the thoughts and great words toward which he longingly strove, all ignorant as he was, of their full significance.

His ignorance and faith were almost painful to witness as he knelt on the threshold of the Temple, accepting the candles which burned afar off for veritable stars.

The house in which Silvère and Aunt Dide dwelt, consisted of a large room into which opened the street door; this room, which was paved, served both as kitchen and dining-room, and had as furniture only straw chairs, a table on trestles, and a large box which Adelaide had transformed into a sofa, by throwing over the lid a ragged woollen cover. In one corner, at the left of a huge chimney, stood a Holy Virgin in plaster, surrounded by artificial flowers—the traditional Holy Mother, which is to be found in all the Provençal houses, whether its inmates be irreligious or otherwise. A long corridor led to the little courtyard behind the house, and to the well on the left of the corridor was Aunt Dide's room, small, and containing an iron bedstead and one chair. On the right, in a still smaller room, was Silvère's bed and a series of shelves which he had built

from floor to ceiling, to hold his dear books which he had picked up at the second-hand stalls in the neighborhood. He read at night, with his lamp fastened by a nail to the head of his bed, and, if his grandmother were taken ill, he was at her side at the first sound.

The life led by the young man differed little from the life of the boy. He had all his father's repugnance to wine-shops and Sunday dissipation. His comrades disgusted him by their brutal pleasures. He preferred to read and to puzzle his brain over some simple problem in Geometry. Aunt Dide now intrusted to him all her commissions, and never went out doors herself.

The young man's heart sometimes ached with pity for her, as he saw her living within a stone's throw of her children, and yet as totally abandoned by them as if she were dead. If at times he had a vague consciousness that Aunt Dide was expiating old faults, he said to himself: "All the more reason then for me to love her, and to forgive her."

Republican ideas are the natural outgrowth of a nature like this. Silvère read and re-read a volume of Rousseau, which he had found on a book-stall. That dream of universal happiness, so precious to the unfortunate, the words "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," rang in his ears with the sonorous sound of bells calling the faithful to their knees. When he learned that the Republic had been proclaimed in France, he at once believed that every one was to be supremely happy.

His semi-instruction allowed him to see further than the other workmen, and his aspirations did not stop at his daily

bread. His complete ignorance of men and things retained him in this Eden for some time, and when he saw that all was not going as smoothly as he had hoped in his ideal Republic, he was greatly pained. Each act which seemed to strike at the interests of the people excited in him the hottest indignation.

Gentle as a child, his political hatreds were absolutely ferocious. He who would not have killed a fly, talked of shouldering a musket.

Liberty was his passion—an unreasoning, absolute passion into which he put all his energy. Both too ignorant and too well instructed to be tolerant, he dreamed of an ideal government of absolute justice and absolute liberty. It was at this time that his uncle, Macquart, wished to influence him.

Antoine said to himself that this young simpleton would be a bad enemy to manage if he could exasperate him sufficiently, and did his best to ingratiate himself with Silvère, for whose ideas he professed the warmest admiration. He had a way, too, of regarding the triumph of the Republic as the inauguration of happy days for all persons, which flattered the moral aspirations of his nephew, and before long the two men met several times in the week. Antoine endeavored to persuade the young man that the Rougon salon was the principal obstacle to the happiness of France, but he made a great mistake when he called his mother “that old wretch,” and then narrated the scandal of her life. Silvère, red with shame, listened quietly, crushed by this melancholy and unsolicited confidence;

but from this day forth he treated his grandmother with greater tenderness and deference than before.

Macquart soon realized the blunder he had made, but attempted to utilize it by saying that to Pierre Rougon was due all Adelaide's poverty and isolation. To hear him talk one would suppose him to have been always the best of sons, and that his brother's conduct alone had been disgraceful and cruel. Silvère therefore became very indignant with his Uncle Pierre, to Antoine's great contentment.

At each of Silvère's visits the same scenes were repeated. He generally came in at night while the Macquart family were dining. Antoine swallowed his potatoes, grumbling all the time.

"You see, Silvère," he muttered, with a dull rage that he but indifferently concealed, "we have nothing but potatoes to eat. We are not rich enough for meat, which is only for the wealthy. It is impossible to make both ends meet with children who eat like the devil!"

Gervaise and Jean cast down their eyes, and did not dare to touch the loaf again. Silvère, who lived half the time in the sky, did not grasp the position of things, and uttered in a calm voice, these words which were big with a tempest:

"But, uncle, you ought to work."

"Oh! yes," sneered Macquart, keenly sensitive to this touch on his open wound; "oh! yes; you want me to work, do you? You want these rich people to speculate on me, do you? You want me to work for twenty sous, I suppose."

"Twenty sous are twenty sous, you know; and even a little helps in a house. But why don't you go into some business? You, as an old soldier, could easily find something to do."

Fine here interfered with a heedlessness of which she soon repented.

"That is just what I tell him every day," she cried; "and the Inspector of the Market wants an assistant. I spoke to him of my husband, and he is well disposed toward us."

Macquart interrupted her.

"Hold your tongue," he said, brutally. "These women never know what they say. They would not appoint me. They know my opinions too well."

Antoine refused every position that was offered, alleging the most singular reasons, and when any one argued with him he became perfectly terrible.

If Jean, after dinner, took up a newspaper, his father would say:

"You had much better go to bed. To-morrow you will be up late, and lose your day. Just think of your bringing me eight francs less than you ought last week! But I will settle that. I have told your master never to pay you, and that I will call in person for the money."

Jean went to bed to escape from his father's recriminations. He sympathized little with Silvère. Politics wearied him, and he thought his cousin something of a prig.

When the table was cleared away, and the two women talked apart in low voices, Macquart would exclaim:

"Well! Upon my word! Is there nothing to mend here? We are all in rags, and yet you sit idle. Listen, Gervaise, I have been to see your mistress, and she has little to say that is good of you."

Gervaise, who was twenty, colored at being reproved in this way before Silvère, who was never comfortable in her presence since one night, when coming in late, he had found mother and daughter both dead-drunk, with an empty bottle in front of them. From that hour he never saw his cousin without remembering this shameful spectacle. He was also repelled by the stories he had heard about her. Innocent as a girl himself, he looked at her stealthily with vague astonishment.

When the two women took up their needles and began to repair their old garments, Macquart leaned back luxuriously on the best seat, sipping his coffee and smoking. This was the hour generally selected by the old rascal to accuse the rich of living on the sweat of the poor. He raged magnificently against those gentlemen in La Ville Neuve who lived in idleness, and were supported by the labor of the lower classes. The distorted notions he had acquired from the newspapers of that same morning became grotesque and more monstrous still, as they passed through his lips. He talked fluently of a time not far off when no one would be compelled to work. He reserved for the Rougons the most furious, bitter hate. He had not quite digested the potatoes he had eaten.

"I saw that conceited fool, Félicité," he said, "buying a chicken in the market. These robbers eat chickens, you see!"

"Aunt Dide," replied Silvère, "says that Uncle Pierre was very kind to you when you first came back. Did he not expend quite a large sum for you at that time?"

"A large sum!" howled Antoine, angrily. "Your grandmother is crazy! I never had anything from those brigands!"

Fine again interfered, and reminded her husband that he had had a complete outfit of clothes, a year's lodging, and two hundred francs in cash. Antoine bade her hold her peace, and continued with fast increasing anger:

"Two hundred francs! That is a large amount, indeed! I was entitled to ten thousand! We must on no account forget the bone they threw to the dog, nor the old coat which Pierre gave me because it was too ragged and dirty for him to wear again."

He lied; but no one dared contradict him. He turned to Silvère:

"You are very simple to defend them," he said. "They robbed your mother, who would be alive to-day had she had money enough to be properly taken care of."

"No, uncle, you are unjust. My mother died from no lack of care, and I know that my father would never have accepted a cent from his wife's family."

"Nonsense! Your father would have taken the money just as any other man would have done. We, too, have been pillaged, and we ought to join forces:" and Macquart began for the fiftieth time to tell the story of the fifty thousand francs. His nephew knew it by heart, and listened with some impatience.

"If you were a man," said Antoine, as he finished, "you would go some day with me, and we would make a nice row at the Rougon mansion. We would not go out until they gave us the money."

But Silvère became very grave, and replied in a stern voice:

"If these people have robbed us, so much the worse for them. I do not want their money. Do you not see, uncle, that it is not for us to strike at one of our own family? If they have done wrong, their punishment is sure to come, sooner or later."

"What an utter simpleton you are!" cried his uncle. "Do you suppose that God cares what becomes of us? We are a most miserable set, and there is not a member of our family who would throw me a crust of bread if I were starving."

Gervaise here said, timidly:

"But, papa, Cousin Pascal was very good to you last winter when you were ill."

"He took care of you without ever asking a sou," added Fine, coming to her daughter's assistance; "and many a time did he give me a five franc piece to provide you with a good soup."

"Indeed! I should have died," answered Macquart, "if I had not had a good constitution. Hold your tongue, you silly creatures! They all wish to see me dead! If I am ever ill again, I will thank you not to send for my nephew, for I am none too much at my ease when I know myself to be in his hands. He has no

practice whatever; and as for that Aristide, he is a little viper. You will see some day how readily he will turn his coat; and there is Eugène, whom they pretend has such a distinguished position in Paris. I know all about it! He is an employé in La Rue de Jerusalem. He is a spy."

"Who told you so?" asked Silvère, whose upright nature was deeply wounded by his uncle's lying accusations.

"I don't know who told me, but it is true all the same. He is a spy. As for you, you stand like a sheep in the hands of the shearer. You are no man at all! I do not wish to say any evil of your brother François; but were I in your place, I should not be over pleased with the manner in which he has behaved. He makes a great deal of money at Marseilles, and has never sent you a sou. If you should be starving some day, I advise you never to turn to him—"

"I hope I shall never need to turn to any one," answered the young man, proudly. "My work keeps my aunt and myself in comfort. You are very cruel, uncle."

"No, I am not cruel. I only tell you the truth, for your eyes ought to be opened. Our family are a miserable set—this is the truth, even down to Maxime, Aristide's little son, who is only nine years old, and yet sticks out his tongue at me when we meet in the street. That child will beat his mother some day, and I shall be glad of it!"

All the dirty linen washed so complacently by Macquart before his nephew, was a heavy burthen to the young man;

but Antoine did his best to exasperate him against all his relatives.

"Oh, yes, defend them," he cried. "I am telling you all this, so that you can the better protect my poor mother, who has been treated by all these people in the most outrageous manner. You know nothing about it. The Rougons have forbidden Aristide's boy to say good-morning to the old lady, and Félicité talks of placing her in a lunatic asylum."

The young man turned very pale.

"Enough!" he cried; "not another word. I cannot bear it."

"Well, well; I will say no more, if it annoys you," replied the old rascal, with an affectation of kindness. "There are other things which you ought to know, nevertheless; unless you wish to play the part of a fool, and be always imposed upon."

Macquart hoped to incite Silvère against the Rougons, and also enjoyed the most exquisite pleasure in bringing tears to the eyes of the young man, whom he heartily disliked, probably because he was a good workman and industrious. He used all his ingenuity to invent the most atrocious falsehoods, which should strike to the heart of the young man. Antoine gloated over his pallor and trembling lips, and when he had exhausted himself, he took up politics.

"The Rougons are preparing a master-blow," he said.

"What do you mean?" asked Silvère.

"I mean that they are arranging a plan by which they are to seize, one of these nights, all the good citizens and place them in prison."

The young man ventured to express a doubt, but his uncle gave all the details with precision—told of the long lists and of the names upon these lists, and by degrees Silvère credited this old woman's tale, and raged in his turn against the enemies of the Republic.

"These are the people whom we ought to render powerless, if we wish to save the country. But what do they intend to do with the citizens they arrest?"

"What do they intend to do with them!" answered Macquart, with a laugh. "They mean to shoot them in their dungeons."

Silvère, stupefied with horror, glared at his uncle in silence.

"And these will not be the first they have assassinated either. You have only to go out any night behind the prison, and you will hear the shots and the groans."

The two men sat and talked until after midnight, while the women crept quietly off to bed. It was a strange conversation, during which the uncle drank innumerable glasses of brandy, and from which the nephew rose intoxicated also, but only with enthusiasm. Antoine could obtain from the young Republican no positive promise. The youth would only say that Eternal Justice would have its way sooner or later, and punish the wicked.

The youth talked, to be sure, vaguely, of bearing arms against the enemies of the Republic; but as soon as his uncle personified these enemies, in his Uncle Pierre or other persons of his acquaintance, he drew back in horror. Nevertheless, Antoine had over his life a very powerful

influence. He irritated his nerves by his constant diatribes, and ended by inducing him to look forward to happiness as only to be obtained by armed violence.

When Silvère was sixteen, Macquart initiated him into the secret society of the Montagnards, that powerful association of the South. And from that moment the young Republican coveted the smuggler's carabine, which Adelaide had hung over her mantel. One night, when his grandmother was asleep, he cleaned it and then hung it again on its nail and waited. He rocked himself with the most fanciful hopes—dreamed of Homeric contests and chivalric engagements from which the defenders of Liberty should emerge conquerors, and receive the applause of the world.

Macquart was not discouraged. He said that he would strangle the Rougons if ever he got them cornered. About this time he saw himself compelled to go to work, for in 1850, Fine died suddenly of a congestion of the lungs, which she caught by going to wash the family linen in the Viorne, and bringing it home wet on her shoulders. Her death appalled Macquart, for with her perished his income. When, at the end of a few days, he sold the furnace over which his wife cooked her chestnuts, and the trestle she used in mending the straw chairs, he burst out in angry reproaches against Heaven, for having taken away the good woman, of whom, during her life, he had been heartily ashamed, and who now he would so gladly have brought back.

He now was more eager than ever that his children

should pass no idle moments. A month later however, Gervaise, wearied by his continual exactions, went away with her two children and Lantier. They went to Paris. Antoine swore about his daughter from morning until night, and prayed that she would die in a hospital.

Before long Jean followed his sister's example. He waited for pay-day, and managed to get hold of his own money, and then said to one of his friends, who repeated it to Antoine, that he would no longer take care of his father, who never lifted a finger for himself.

The next day Antoine was alone, without a sou, in the rooms where for twenty years he had lived in such exceeding comfort. At first he was furiously angry, and broke everything, but at last became almost sick in his fear of work. When Silvère came to see him, he complained, with tears, of the ingratitude of children. Had he not always been a good father? Jean and Gervaise were monsters of ingratitude—they abandoned him now because he was old and they could get no more from him.

"But, uncle," said Silvère, "you are still able to work."

Macquart coughed and said feebly, that he for a long time had been unable to endure the smallest fatigue; and when his nephew went away he borrowed ten francs of him. For a month Antoine lived on the articles which he carried daily to be sold, and soon only one table, a chair and his bed were all that was left.

When he was at the end of all his resources, with the pallor of a man who is about to commit suicide, he pulled out the bundle of osier which had lain undisturbed for

a quarter of a century. He lifted it as if it weighed tons. He began to braid baskets, and was more incendiary in his discourse than ever before. He spoke of all the rich men in the town with the most abusive epithets. But Antoine never worked when he could extract any money from Silvère or a comrade. He was no longer "Monsieur" Macquart, the workman, who, carefully dressed and shaved, played at being a gentleman, but he became once more the dirty devil who had formerly speculated on his rags with such good results. Now that he was to be seen daily at Market, selling his baskets, Félicité actually did not dare go there. He once mortified her by a terrible scene.

As may be supposed, Macquart welcomed the Coup d'État with the noisy joy of a dog who scents his prey; but, as for a few days Plassans was undisturbed, Antoine thought his plans would all fail, and not until he heard of the risings all over the country did he hope again. In the evening he was with some of the faithful in a wine-shop in the old Quartier when a comrade rushed in, to say that the Insurgents were but a few kilomètres distant. A shout of triumph rang through the room. Macquart himself was almost delirious with enthusiasm. The unexpected arrival of the Insurgents seemed to him a delicate attention of Providence toward himself, and his hands trembled at the thought that he would soon hold the Rougons in his grasp.

Meanwhile Antoine and his friends hurried from the café. All the Republicans who had not already left

Plassans were on the Square. This was the band which Rougon had seen as he ran to conceal himself at his mother's. When the band reached the Rue de Banne, Macquart made four of his especial friends linger a little in the rear. He persuaded them that they should at once arrest the enemies of the Republic, if they hoped to avoid great misfortunes; the truth was, he feared lest Pierre should make his escape, after all. The four men followed him meekly, and they all knocked at Rougon's door. Félicité's courage at this time was most admirable. She opened the street-door.

"We wish to come in," said Macquart, roughly.

"By all means, gentlemen," she said, with sarcastic politeness, pretending not to recognize her brother-in-law.

When Macquart stood in the yellow salon, he bade her call her husband.

"My husband is not here," she said, calmly. "He is travelling on business. He took the Diligence for Marseilles at six o'clock this evening."

Antoine, at this statement, uttered an angry exclamation. He passed into the bed-room, looked under the bed and behind the curtains, his friends lending their cheerful assistance. For a quarter of an hour they searched the rooms. Félicité, quietly seated on the sofa in the salon, was busy fastening her skirts, as if she had been hastily awakened, and had not time to dress properly.

"It is true! The coward has run away!" cried Macquart, looking about, however, suspiciously as he spoke.

He felt almost certain that Pierre could not have abandoned the ground at this decisive moment. He went up to Félicité, who opened her mouth with a prodigious yawn.

"Tell us instantly where your husband is concealed," he said. "I assure you we will do him no harm."

"I have told you the truth," she answered, impatiently. "I cannot give my husband into your hands, for he is not here. You have looked for yourselves, have you not? Then, pray, go and leave me in peace."

Macquart, exasperated by her coolness, would certainly have struck her had not a great uproar been heard from the street. It was the Insurgents sweeping up La Rue de Banne.

Macquart shook his fist at his sister-in-law as he left the salon, and at the foot of the stairs, he bade one of his companions sit down on the lowest step and not move until a new order.

"You will come to me at once, however, if you see Rougon return."

The man obeyed, and dropped heavily on the stairs. When he was on the sidewalk, Macquart lifted his eyes and beheld Félicité leaning out of the window, watching the Insurgents as if they had been a regiment marching to music. This last indication of tranquillity was more than he could bear, and he felt as if he must go back and pitch the old woman into the street. He looked up at her, and said between his teeth:

"Yes, look at us! we will see how you will feel about it to-morrow."

It was about eleven when the Insurgents entered the town through the Roman gate, which was thrown open to them by the Republicans, notwithstanding the lamentations of the porter, from whom they tore the keys by force.

At the head of the column marched the citizens of Plassans, guiding the others—Miette bearing the flag all the more boldly, that she felt that frightened eyes were watching her behind the closed blinds. The Insurgents moved with considerable caution, fearing to be received with a discharge of musketry, although they well knew the calm disposition of the people. But the town seemed dead. There was hardly a sound. Only five or six shutters were open, and at one stood an old man with a candle in his hand. As soon as he caught sight of this girl all in scarlet, appearing to draw after her this crowd of black demons, he shut his window in fear and trembling, terrified at the diabolical sight. The silence of the sleeping town tranquillized the Insurgents, who finally reached the Market Place, which was brightly lighted by the moon. The Hotel de Ville, freshly restored, was a mass of dead white, on which the balcony of the first floor was defined by slender black lines of wrought iron. Several persons stood on the balcony: the Mayor, Commandant Secardot, three or four Municipal Counsellors, and other functionaries. Three thousand Republicans filling the Square stood ready to burst open the closed doors.

The Commandant had found time to slip into his

uniform before he awakened the Mayor, and in five minutes after they were both on the balcony. They heard the approach of the Insurgents.

Secardot wished to fight. He insisted that twenty men were enough to bring this canaille to reason, but the Mayor shrugged his shoulders, and declared that the only thing to do was to capitulate honorably.

He went out upon the balcony, while the moonlight shone on the black and surging mass below, and glittered on the guns and bayonets:

"Who are you? and what do you want?" asked the Mayor, in a firm voice, when the tumult abated.

Then a man in a long coat advanced.

"Open the door," he said, "and avoid a fratricidal contest."

"I command you to retire," replied the Mayor. "I protest in the name of the Law."

These words awoke a great clamor. When calmness was in a degree restored, voices and words were again heard.

"We are here in the name of the Law! Your duty is to respect the fundamental Law of the country—the Constitution which is being outrageously violated!"

"Long live the Constitution! Long live the Republic!" And when the Mayor tried to speak he was interrupted:

"You are a mere functionary, and we intend to remove you," said the man in the long coat.

When the Commandant, who was gnawing his moustache

in a great rage, heard the Mayor thus threatened, he could not keep silent any longer.

“Zounds, man! if I had only four men and a corporal, I would come down and pull your ears to recall you to your senses!”

A fierce growl ran through the crowd, and the Mayor hastily left the balcony, imploring Secardot to be reasonable if he did not wish them all to be murdered.

The doors were broken in at once, the National Guards disarmed, and the Mayor and all the functionaries taken prisoners.

The Commandant, who refused to give up his sword, was protected by the chief of the contingent from Tulettes. The prisoners were taken to a little café in the Market Place.

This body of rebels would not have entered Plassans, had not the chiefs decided that food and rest were necessary before they could proceed to Sainte-Roure. When the Mayor learned that the band wanted food, he offered to procure it for them. This functionary evinced, in these difficult circumstances, a very clear apprehension of the situation. If the hunger of these three thousand men could be appeased, and Plassans did not find them in the morning, sitting on the sidewalks, the citizens would think of them as the phantoms of a bad dream.

Although he was still a prisoner, the Mayor, accompanied by two guards, went to the doors of all the bakers and bade them bring out their bread, and then distributed all the provisions they could discover.

About one o'clock the three thousand men made a hearty meal. Notwithstanding the keen air, the crowd was not without a certain amount of gayety. They blew on their fingers to warm them as they eat, and sat round on the door-steps of the houses. Curious faces peeped out from the windows watching these fierce rebels drinking at the pump.

The police station was invaded and the police disarmed. Miette and Silvère were impelled in this direction. The child, still holding the standard pressed against her breast, leaned against the wall, while the young man, carried away by the human current, assisted his companions in tearing their carabines from the police. Silvère, in his excitement, attacked a stout fellow and snatched his gun; the barrel struck the man's eye and the blood spurted over Silvère's hands, who was suddenly sobered. He looked at his hands, and then at the gun, and fled madly.

"Are you wounded?" cried Miette.

"No, no," he answered, in a choked voice. "I have killed a police officer."

"Did you see him die?"

"No; but his face is covered with blood."

He dragged the girl away, and when they were in the Market he made her sit down. He looked at his hands, and talked incoherently. Miette finally understood that he wished to take leave of his grandmother.

"Go," she said. "Do not be uneasy about me. Wash your hands first."

He went away rapidly, holding his hands far out from

him, without seeming to remember that he could wash them at some one of the fountains near by. He had but one idea, to run to his Aunt Dide's and there plunge his hands into the cold water of the well in the court-yard. All his peaceful, tender childhood returned to him; he felt an irresistible desire to shelter himself among his grandmother's skirts once more, if it were only for a minute. He arrived all out of breath. Aunt Dide had not gone to bed, which at any other time would have occasioned him great surprise. Nor did he, at first, notice his Uncle Rougon, who sat in the corner on the old box.

"Grandmother," he said, rapidly, "you must forgive me. I am going away with the others. I have blood on my hands. I have killed a police officer."

"Killed a police officer!" repeated Aunt Dide, in a strange voice.

Her eyes flashed as she looked at the red stains on his hands. She turned to the chimney.

"The gun," she exclaimed; "where is the gun?"

Silvère, who had left it with Miette, declared it was safe. For the first time Adelaide, in the presence of her grandson, made an allusion to the smuggler Macquart.

"You must bring back the gun," she cried, with singular energy. "It is all that is left of him. Swear that you will bring it back. You have killed a policeman—a policeman killed him!"

She continued to look at Silvère fixedly, with an air of cruel satisfaction. She asked no explanation of his intentions, nor did she weep as grandmothers do when they see

their grandchildren suffer the smallest scratch. She had only one thought apparently.

"Was it with that gun you killed the policeman?" she asked.

Silvère apparently did not understand.

"Yes," he said; "and I am going to wash my hands."

When he returned from the well he saw his uncle, who had heard what he had said to his grandmother. "Félicité was right," Pierre thought; "I shall certainly be ruined by my family. Now that this boy has committed this crime, I shall never receive the office for which I hoped, unless I prevent him from joining the rebels now." He stood in front of the door.

"Listen to me," he said to Silvère; "I am the head of the family, and I forbid you to leave this house. Tomorrow I will assist you in reaching the frontier."

Silvère shrugged his shoulders.

"Let me pass," he said, quietly; "I am not a spy, and I will not betray your hiding-place." And as Rougon continued to talk, he added: "Why do you say I am of your family? Have you not always denied me? Fear has brought you here now, because you know that the day of justice is at hand. Move away, sir. I have a duty to fulfil."

Rougon did not move. Then Aunt Dide, who had listened to Silvère's vehement words in a sort of ecstasy, laid her withered hand on her son's arm.

"Move, Pierre," she said; "the child must go!"

The young man pushed his uncle lightly aside, and passed through the door. Rougon fastened it behind him,

and said to his mother, in a voice that was both angry and threatening:

"If any accident happens to him, it will be your fault. You are utterly mad, and have not the smallest idea of what you are doing."

But Adelaide did not seem to hear. She threw a log on the dying fire, saying as she did so with a vague smile:

"I know all about it. He will stay away a month, and will then come back in better health and looks, than when he went away."

She was speaking of Macquart.

Silvère hurried back to the Market. As he approached the place where he had left Miette, he heard a great noise and confusion of voices.

A cruel scene had just taken place. Among the persons attracted by curiosity to the Square was Justin, a young man of twenty, the cousin of Miette. He hated her, and reproached her with the bread she ate, and it was believed, thus revenged himself for the scorn with which she had rejected his insolent advances. He was a spy on her every movement, for he indulged the fond hope that he could induce his father to put her out of doors.

He had long since discovered her intimacy with Silvère, and only waited a good opportunity to lay it before his father; and this evening, when she slipped out of the house at eight o'clock, he could keep silent no longer, but went at once to the old man. Rébutat was furiously angry, and said he would thrash the girl well, if she ever dared to cross his threshold again.

Justin went comfortably to bed, demoniacally pleased at the scene which he anticipated. But he suddenly decided to go out and see what had become of his cousin. He dressed again and went out. He finally found Miette seated on the bench where she was waiting for Silvère, and when he beheld her wrapped in her pelisse, and with the red folds of the flag sweeping over and behind her, he began to sneer and utter the coarsest jokes. The girl was dumb under these insults, and finally, shaken by her sobs, she buried her face in her hands.

Justin called her every opprobrious epithet and the daughter of a convict, and said she was never to go to his father's house again unless she wished to be kicked out of it.

A little group had gathered around the girl, laughing at this painful scene. At last, however, some one more manly than the others interfered, and told the young man to be silent, or he would be properly chastised. But Justin defied him, saying he was not afraid. At this moment Silvère appeared, and young Rébutat tried to slink away, but hesitated, not being able to deny himself the pleasure of insulting the girl once more before her lover.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I thought that fellow was not far off. It was to follow him that you left us, was it not? Miserable girl, and she is not sixteen. May I ask when the baptism will take place?"

He started back as Silvère raised his clenched fist.

"And please," he continued, "not make a mistake, and be confined with us—"

He was silenced by a blow on his mouth, for Silvère had rushed upon him. The fellow fled, and Silvère made no attempt to follow him. He rushed back to Miette, and dried her tears with spasmodic eagerness.

She lifted her head haughtily.

"I will weep no more," she said. "I am glad he has behaved in this way, for now I have no remorse in having left his father's roof."

She lifted the flag and took her place again among the Insurgents. It was then about two o'clock in the morning. The cold was so keen that the Republicans had risen to their feet, and were trying to keep warm by moving about the Square.

Orders were given to march on. The column reformed, and the prisoners were placed in the centre.

At this moment Aristide was seen moving busily about. He had come to the conclusion, that, in the face of this formidable rising, it would be most imprudent not to remain the friend of the Republicans; but at the same time, as he did not wish to commit himself too far with them, he came with his arm in a sling to wish them God-speed, complaining bitterly that he was not able to shoulder a musket. He met his brother Pascal in the crowd, carrying his case of surgical instruments. The physician told him in a quiet voice that he was going with the Insurgents. Aristide laughed in his sleeve at his innocence, and got away as soon as he could, lest he should be appointed Guardian of the town—a position which he regarded as singularly hazardous.

The Insurgents had little hope of holding Plassans, for the town was imbued with too thorough a reactionary spirit. They would all have gone away had not Macquart offered to hold Plassans on the condition that twenty men of courage and determination should be left under his orders.

The twenty men were detailed, and he marched at their head triumphantly into the Mayor's house. As he did this the main body left by the great gate, leaving behind them the silent and deserted streets, adown which they had swept like a tempest. Before them stretched the highway, white in the moonlight.

Miette refused any assistance from Silvère, and walked on firm and erect, holding the standard of the red flag in both hands, unheeding the numbness of her fingers, now blue with the cold.

CHAPTER V.

"THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENTS."

THE Insurrectionary band resumed its march through the cold, still country, and arrived at Orchères about ten o'clock in the morning. Their road wound along the hills, at the base of which ran the Viorne. On the left the plain stretched out, dotted by villages. At the right rose the desolate peak of the Garrigues, rusty as if browned by the sun. The road passed among huge boulders, between which glimpses of the valley could be caught. Nothing was wilder—nothing more grand than this road hewn through the hills. At night the aspect of the place was peculiarly solemn. Under the pale light the Insurgents swept along, as through an avenue of a ruined town, with its temples shattered and fallen on either side. The moon transformed each rock into a mutilated column, a crumbled capital, or a wall pierced by mysterious portals.

High up, the Garrigues slept like an immense Cyclopean city, whose terraces, houses and obeliskes hid half the sky; and below, the moonlight spread over the plain, where floated a light fog. The rebels might have fancied, had they been imaginative, that they were on a gigantic causeway, constructed on the shore of a phosphorescent sea.

That night the Viorne roared hoarsely, but through the noise it made the sharp notes of the tocsin were heard.

The villages scattered over the plain on the other side of the river were sounding the alarm and lighting their fires. Until daybreak the marching column saw the insurrection run along the valley like a train of gunpowder. The fires pierced the darkness with glittering red points—distant strains of music came on the wind—and all the extent of country before them seemed to be stirred by angry shivers. For leagues the spectacle remained the same. These men, who marched in the blind fever planted there by the events in Paris, were immensely excited by the spectacle of the whole earth, as it were, shaken by revolt. They believed that France was with them; that beyond the Viorne, vast armies of men were hastening, like themselves, to the defence of the Republic; and these uncultivated minds, with the facile belief of masses, looked forward to an easy victory. Had any one ventured to say that they were the only ones to stand firm, and that the rest of the French people were in a state of abject terror, the rash speaker would have been seized and the words strangled in his throat. They were constantly encouraged also by the welcome they received from the villages along their route. The inhabitants rose in a body, the women ran to meet them and wish them a speedy victory. The men, half-clothed, joined them with weapons in their hands. At each village was a new ovation, cries of welcome and cordial adieux.

Toward morning the moon disappeared behind the Garrigues, and the march was continued in the thick darkness of a winter night. They could see neither the hills

nor the valleys; they heard only the muffled, plaintive strokes of bells, hidden they knew not where, whose despairing appeals pushed them on unrelentingly.

Meanwhile, Miette and Silvère had not faltered in their march; but just before daybreak the girl admitted that she was utterly worn out, and could not keep up with the long strides of the men about her. But she was determined they should hear no complaint, for she was ashamed that she was not as strong as a boy. Silvère, seeing that the flag-staff wavered in her stiff hands, tried to induce her to let him carry it, but with childish obstinacy she would not allow him to do more than aid her with one hand. But when the moon was hidden she allowed him not only to bear the standard but to support her also.

"Are you very tired, my poor little Miette?" asked her companion.

"Only a little," she answered, in a faint voice.

"Shall we rest a while?"

She did not reply, and he saw that she was nearly unconscious. He confided the flag to one of the Insurgents, and left the ranks, carrying the girl in his arms. She struggled a little, vexed to be treated like a child. He calmed her, telling her that he knew of a road across the country which would abridge the distance by half. They could rest, he said, a good hour, and then reach Orchères as soon as the band.

It was then six o'clock. A light fog rose from the Viorne, and the night seemed very black. The young people climbed one of the spurs of the Garrigues for a

little way, and then seated themselves on a rock. Around them was a fathomless abyss of darkness; it was as if they had been shipwrecked on a reef. They heard not a sound now except two bells, one of which rang far down at their feet in some village built along the road. The other was more distant, and seemed to reply to the feverish moans of the first, by sobs and complaints.

Miette and Silvère, warmed by their rapid walk, no longer felt the cold. They did not speak, however, but listened in melancholy silence to the appeal of the tocsin. They could not see each other, and Miette was frightened. She grasped Silvère's hand mechanically, and held it tightly in hers. After the uproar of the last few hours, this sudden silence—this solitude, in which they sat side by side in weary bewilderment, was as a sudden awakening from a tumultuous dream. It seemed to them as if they had been thrown upon a rocky shore by some stupendous wave.

An inevitable reaction set in; they forgot their enthusiasm and the band of men whom they were to rejoin. They were filled with the ineffable joy of feeling themselves once more alone with each other, hand in hand.

"You will not let me go with you, I know," said the young girl. "I could march by your side all night, but they go so fast that I could not breathe."

"But why should I not let you go with me?" asked the young man.

"I do not know; I am afraid you do not love me. I cannot walk as far as you, and you think me only a

child." Silvère smiled, and Miette divined it in spite of the darkness.

She continued in a decided voice:

"I am tired of being treated as your sister: I wish to be your wife," and she laid her head on his breast, and held him closely in her arms.

"We are cold—this will warm us."

Until this troubled hour the young people had loved each other with fraternal tenderness. In their ignorance they continued to believe that it was friendship alone which induced them to linger thus, each in the arms of the other. Every girl who lies on the shoulder of a youth is already a woman—innocent and unconscious, whom a caress can awaken. When lovers kiss each other on the cheeks, the way is short to the lips. One kiss transforms friends to lovers. It was on this cold, black night in December, with the dreary tocsin vibrating in their ears, that Miette and Silvère exchanged one of those kisses which summon every drop of blood from the heart to the lips.

Miette had said, "This will warm us!"—and they innocently waited. They each felt the arms of the other hot through their clothing. They felt their breasts rise with the same sigh. A bright light passed before their closed eyes, and strange noises rang through their brains. This languid happiness was indefinitely prolonged, and it was in that dream that their lips met. The kiss was long and eager, and in shame and confusion they separated. When their blood ran less hotly in their veins, they found themselves far apart.

Miette did not dare approach Silvère, who was so silent that she was not even sure he was there. If their walk had not been so rapid and the night so dark, this kiss would never have been exchanged. Miette thought of Justin and of the vile words he had uttered, and at which she had wept without understanding their significance; now her cheeks tingled with shame. She uttered a stifled sob.

"What is it?" asked Silvère, anxiously. "Why do you weep?"

"Let me be," she answered. "I do not know." Then, amid her tears, she added:

"How unfortunate I am! When I was only ten, I was stoned by the children in the street. To-day I am treated as if I were the vilest of the vile. Justin was right, Silvère. We are behaving very badly."

The young man in consternation put his arms about her with vain efforts to console her.

"I love you," he murmured. "I am your brother. Why do you say we are behaving badly? Have we not always embraced each other when we separated?"

"Yes, but not in the same way," she answered, in a voice that was almost inaudible. "I felt so strangely that I know it was wrong, and the men will laugh as I pass them, and they will have a right to do so."

The young man could say nothing, for he could find no words to soothe this innocent child, whom that first kiss of passion threw into such mortal terror.

He drew her closer, but she struggled away from him,

and said, pantingly: "If you choose, we can leave the country. I shall never dare to return to Plassans. My uncle will beat me, and every one will point at me."

Then with sudden irritation she added:

"No. I am accursed. I forbid you to leave Aunt Dide to follow me. You must leave me here on this highway."

"Miette! Miette!" cried Silvère; "how can you say such cruel things?"

"How are they cruel? They are only true! I will not go back to Plassans with you."

The young man kissed her once more on her lips.

"You will be my wife; and no one will dare say a word against you," he murmured.

"No, no," she answered, faintly. "I am too young to be your wife. You must leave me here."

Then Silvère could bear no more, and burst into wild, boyish sobs. Miette, terrified at the sound, wound her arms tenderly about him, and cried out that it was all her fault; and the two children mingled their tears, while the bells continued their dreary sound.

The young man said at last:

"You are right; we cannot return to Plassans. If we are conquerors I will go for Aunt Dide and take her away with us. If we are vanquished—" He stopped.

"If we are vanquished," repeated Miette, gently.

"I shall not be here in that case," continued Silvère, in a low voice; "and you must console the poor old grandmother."

"It is better to die," sighed the girl, pressing her lips once more to his. She wished to die with him.

Die! Die! The bells repeated the word with ever growing earnestness, and the lovers listened to the dreary summons as, with lip on lip, they drank the sweetest joy.

"I love you! I love you!" murmured Silvère.

Miette shook her head; she seemed to say that the young man was hiding something from her. Her ardent nature had an intuitive perception of the fulness of life, and this rebellion of her blood and her nerves she frankly evinced by her burning, restless hands, and her vague entreaties.

Somewhat calmed at last, she placed her head on Silvère's shoulder. The young man leaned over her and kissed her again. She drank in his kisses, and asked them their secret meaning. She questioned them; she felt their liquid fire run through her veins. A sudden fatigue overwhelmed her, and she fell asleep.

Silvère wrapped the red pelisse more closely about her and himself, and neither felt the cold. When Silvère knew by Miette's regular breathing that she was at last asleep, he rejoiced at this repose, which would allow her after a while to continue on her way. He determined to let her sleep an hour undisturbed. The heavens were still black; low down in the East a faint white line indicated the approach of day.

There must have been a grove of pines quite near, for their musical greeting to the new-born day, the soft sighing of the wind through their branches, was heard by Silvère, mingled with the wail of the bells which still vibrated through the keen air, soothing Miette's slumbers as they had lulled the hot fever of her blood.

These children, until this troubled night, had lived one of those innocent idyls which exist sometimes among the working classes, in their simplicity reminding one of an ancient Greek fable.

Miette was not more than nine when her father was sent to prison for having killed a gendarme. The trial was long remembered in the country. The criminal haughtily confessed the murder, but swore he did it in self-defence. "It was a duel," he said, "not an assassination." Nothing moved him from this assertion. The judge told him that a gendarme had a right to fire at a poacher, but a poacher none to attack a gendarme. Chantegreil escaped the guillotine only on account of the good character he had previously borne, and wept like a child when he was sent to Toulon.

The little girl, who had lost her mother in the cradle, lived with her grandfather in a little village among the mountains, and when the poacher left them, the child and the old man lived on charity, and finally the old man died of grief. Miette was alone, and would have begged on the highway had not the neighbors remembered that she had an aunt at Plassans, and one, more kind-hearted than the others, hunted up this aunt, who gave the child a very cool reception.

Eulalie Chantegreil was a big, wilful creature, who led her husband by the nose, as the neighbors said. But the truth was that her husband had the greatest respect for this strong woman, who was endowed with most uncommon energy and perseverance. The family prospered owing

to her, but the good man groaned when, coming home one night, he found Miette installed there also. But his wife closed his lips by saying:

“Pshaw! The child is strong and stout. She will do instead of a servant. We can feed and clothe her, and save the wages!”

This calculation soothed her husband, who felt of the child's arms, and found them very well developed for her age. The very next day he began to make her useful. The work done by peasants at the South is much lighter than at the North. Women are rarely seen there mowing the earth, bearing burthens or performing the work of men—but gather olives and the leaves of the mulberry trees, while their hardest labor is to weed the ground.

Miette worked with a light heart—life in the open air was both her joy and her health. She was all smiles as long as her aunt lived, for the good woman, in spite of her roughness, had a tender, loving heart. She often protected the child against the heavy tasks her husband imposed, and would say:

“Don't you see, simpleton, if you wear her out to-day, that she can do nothing to-morrow?”

This argument was decisive. Rebufat submitted quietly, and carried the burthen himself which he had intended to impose on the child.

The only thing that disturbed the child's peace while her aunt lived, was the incessant persecution to which she was subjected by her cousin. He liked to tread on her feet, push and pinch her secretly, and when he saw the pain he

had given, laughed with that peculiar laugh of people who enjoy the miseries of others.

Miette would look at him with her great black eyes full of haughty disdain and the boy would shiver, for in reality he stood in deadly terror of the girl.

Aunt Eulalie died suddenly, and from that day Rebufat treated Miette like a beast of burthen. She did not complain, for she felt that she had a debt to pay, but half the night through she would weep for that good aunt who had stood between her and her taskmaster. She was not indolent; indeed, she liked work. She was proud of her strong arms and broad shoulders. She was greatly disturbed, however, by her uncle's distrust and by his incessant reproaches. A stranger would never have been treated as she was, but being a poor relation, she was forced to submit. She paid for all she received ten times over, and there was not a day that she was not taunted with the bread she ate.

Justin continued to torture her—his favorite trick was to talk to her constantly of her father. He gave her the most odious details of the murder and the trial. He then told her how convicts were treated—how many hours they were compelled to work each day with a ball and chain. Miette tried to close her ears, but it was quite impossible. Sometimes she would fly at Justin in childish rage, and then her uncle would say with a sneer:

“Blood never lies. You will end at the galleys as well as your father!”

As Miette grew older, she learned to endure her

martyrdom without tears, and fixed her eyes on Justin in a way that reduced him to silence. She was tempted at times to run away, but she absolutely had not the courage to avow herself conquered by the persecutions she endured. She knew, too, that she earned her bread, and was not indebted to the Rebufats. This certainly satisfied her pride. She lived, therefore, in a continual contest. Her line of conduct was to perform each duty conscientiously, and to avenge herself for the treatment she received by a contemptuous silence. She knew that her uncle was constantly urged by Justin to send her away from the house, and she took a certain kind of pleasure in remaining.

She lived an isolated life, growing up in revolt, and naturally acquired opinions which were startling enough to those about her.

Her thoughts were constantly on her father, and she finally arrived at the firm belief that he had been most unjustly treated, and when the little scamps in the street called out after her: "There she goes—the convict's daughter!" she would hurry on with compressed lips and eyes dusky with wrath.

As she entered the gate, she would turn and look back at the little mob.

She would have grown hard and cruel, like all pariahs, if her childhood had not had some pleasant memories for her. As she thought of these the hot tears would come, and she would run and hide herself, knowing intuitively that if her tears were seen, her martyrdom would be fiercer; and when she had cried her heart out she would

bathe her eyes and regain her calmness, doing her best not to seem a child.

The well in the court-yard of the house inhabited by Aunt Dide and Silvère was on the boundary line, and Silvère drew the water. One day the pulley broke, and the young wheelwright arranged a new one. To mount it he was obliged to climb upon the wall, and when his task was completed, he turned an inquisitive glance into the next enclosure. A peasant girl was weeding a bed of vegetables. It was July; the air was soft and balmy, and the sun just setting. A colored handkerchief was knotted loosely over the girl's shoulders. Her white sleeves were rolled up, and she was kneeling on the folds of her dark blue cotton skirts, which was fastened by two bretelles crossing over her back. She was steadily pulling up the weeds and throwing them into an old basket at her side. The young man watched the decided, quick movements of those brown arms. She had looked up once, but immediately lowered her head so that he could not see her face. He sat looking at her curiously, swinging his chisel in his hand, when suddenly the chisel fell on the edge of the well and rebounded into the Jas-Meiffren land.

Silvère hesitated, not knowing whether he should descend or not; but the peasant girl quietly rose, picked up the chisel and held it up to Silvère, who leaned down from the wall in great embarrassment. He saw that the girl was very young; she raised her charming face, with its rich, ripe lips and superb black eyes. He had never before

been so near any girl, and he did not know that a mouth and pair of eyes could be so pleasing to look at. He looked at the arm which held the chisel toward him. The arm was of a golden brown to the elbow, and a little above, but in the shadow of the chemise sleeve, the skin was milky white. The little peasant girl began to be very much embarrassed; but neither youth nor maiden knew what to do next. They had not exchanged a word. Silvère forgot to say, "Thank you."

"What is your name?" he said at last.

"Marie," answered the girl; "but everybody calls me Miette—and you? what is your name?"

"Silvère," replied the young workman, quickly. "I am fifteen; how old are you?"

"I shall be eleven on All Saints' Day."

Silvère uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"And I thought you a woman grown!" he said. "Your arms are so large!"

She laughed and gave a pleased glance at her sturdy arms. Then a brief silence ensued, and as Silvère seemed to have no more questions to ask, Miette returned to her weeds, while he still sat on the wall. The oblique rays of the sun fell on the yellow earth, and in this bright light the boy watched the peasant girl, in her blue skirts and white chemise. Suddenly he felt ashamed of himself, and hastily left the wall.

That evening Silvère, full of his adventure, tried to elicit some information from Aunt Dide. Perhaps she could tell him who this Miette, with such shining eyes and rosy

lips, might be. But Aunt Dide had never so much as cast one glance over that high wall; it was to her as a rampart which shut in all her Past. She was utterly ignorant of all that took place in those old grounds, and wished to remain so, for it was there she had buried her love, her heart, and her flesh. At Silvère's first question she started back in dismay. Did he intend to disturb the ashes of those extinct days, and make her weep, as Antoine had done?

"I do not know," she gasped. "I never go out. I never see any one."

Silvère waited for morning with some impatience, and as soon as he reached the workshop he made his comrades talk. They were quite ready to do so. He said nothing of his interview with Miette, but spoke vaguely of a girl who lived at Jas-Meiffren.

"Oh! that is little Chantegreil!" cried one of his companions, and at once proceeded to narrate the story of the poacher and his child Miette, with that blind hatred felt by the crowd toward pariahs. The girl was spoken of with especial coarseness. They stigmatized her as the convict's daughter, as if that reason were sufficient for condemning the poor little girl to an eternal shame.

The wheelwright, Vron, a good, honest man, finally imposed silence upon them.

"Hold your tongues, boys!" he said. "Are you not ashamed to attack a child like that? I have seen her, and she has a good face. I am told, too, that she is not afraid of work, and that she can do as much now as a

woman of thirty. There are plenty of do-nothings about, and I trust that when the time comes she will get a good husband, who will compel you all to keep a civil tongue in your heads."

Silvère, who had grown sick at the coarse jests of these men, felt tears spring to his eyes at these last words, but he did not speak. He took up his hammer and went to work with unusual energy.

That night, as soon as he left the workshop, he ran to the wall. He saw Miette weeding the garden as she had done the night before. She went toward him with an embarrassed smile.

"You are Chantegreil, are you not?" he asked.

She recoiled; the smile left her lips and her eyes grew dark and defiant. Did he mean to insult her like the others? She turned her back without replying.

Silvère looked at her in consternation, and hastened to add—

"Don't go; I did not intend to say anything you would not like. I have several things to say to you."

She came back slowly and suspiciously. Silvère, however, did not speak, for he was afraid of committing some new blunder.

Finally, with his whole heart in his voice, he said:

"Would you like me for a friend?"

And as Miette lifted her radiant eyes, he continued, eagerly:

"I know that people worry you. They shall not do so now, for I will protect you."

The child smiled. This friendship so frankly offered annihilated all her bad dreams. She shook her head, and answered :

“No ; I do not wish you to quarrel with any one on my account. You would have too much to do. Then, too, there are some people against whom it is impossible for you to defend me.”

Silvère opened his mouth to contradict her, but in a coaxing voice she added, gently :

“It is enough that you should be my friend.”

Then they talked for a time, and dropped their voices very low. Miette told her new friend of her cousin and of her uncle. On no account, she said, must they ever see him on the top of the wall. Justin would be unendurable, if he should have a weapon like that against her. She told of her fears and her trouble with the frankness of a little girl, who meets another to whom her mother has forbidden her to speak. Silvère understood only that he could not see Miette as often as he pleased. He said he would not climb the wall again, and they were trying to arrange some way of seeing each other when, suddenly, Miette saw Justin in the distance, and hurriedly begged Silvère to vanish. He dropped on his side of the wall, and stood there listening a few minutes.

The next day he came to the wall again, but Miette was not there : she had finished her work in that part of the garden. A whole week elapsed without Silvère seeing her, and he thought seriously of going deliberately to Jas-Meiffren and asking to see Miette.

The well was very deep, and on each side of the wall rounded the half circle. In the sleeping water the two openings were reflected like two half moons separated by the black shadow of the wall. They looked like two singularly bright mirrors, reflecting on sunny mornings, with marvellous fidelity, each leaf of the ivy that clambered on the wall.

One morning very early Silvère, when he went to draw the water for Aunt Dide, leaned over mechanically as he caught the rope. He stood in silent amazement, for it seemed to him he could distinguish a young girl's face looking at him with a faint smile, but as he grasped the rope the water trembled, and the face was lost. He waited, with his heart in his mouth, for the water to be smooth once more, and as the ripples extended and disappeared, he saw the apparition return with the timid grace of a phantom. At last the water was calm once more, and he saw Miette's face, her colored kerchief and white chemise. She could see Silvère also, and presently they exchanged a cheerful nod. At last they spoke.

"How do you do, Silvère?"

"How do you do, Miette?"

The strange sound of their voices startled them, for in this cool damp place they had acquired a singular sweetness, and seemed to come from afar off with that peculiar clearness one hears in voices heard at evening in the country. They realized that they could speak very softly, and yet be heard by each other. The well echoed the

faintest sigh, and they leaned over, looking down and talking. Miette told him how grieved she had been for a week not to see him. She was at work at the other end of the grounds, and could not get away. She gave a little angry toss of the head as she spoke, to which Silvère responded by a similar movement. They made their little confidences exactly as if they were face to face. Little did it matter to them that the wall was between them, now that they could see each other in this discreet water.

"I knew," said Miette, sagaciously, "that you drew the water every day at this hour: I can always hear the creaking of the rope. So I have made the excuse that the water from the well cooks vegetables better than that from the reservoir, which we have used, and I determined to come here every morning when you did, so I might say good-morning to you without any one knowing it."

She laughed with innocent delight at her own shrewdness, as she added:

"But I did not suppose that we should see each other in the water!"

This was, in fact, a most unlooked-for amusement to these children. At last Miette said she must go, and bade Silvère draw up his bucket. But Silvère did not dare move, for it hurt him to mar the smiling face he saw reflected there. He touched the rope. A light shiver passed over the water, and Miette's smiles faded. He stopped, seized by a strange fear. He fancied that she wept. But the child cried:

"Go! go!" with a laugh, repeated by the echo at the same moment.

She suddenly dropped a pail into the well. All was black then. And Silvère filled his buckets mournfully, and listened to Miette's footsteps on the other side of the wall.

From this time the young people never missed this morning meeting—if meeting it can be called. The sleeping water, wherein they saw each other, gave to these interviews an indefinite charm. They no longer cared to see each other face to face; it was much more amusing to take the well for a mirror and to intrust to the echo their mutual good-morning. They soon came to regard the well as an old friend. They liked to look down on that motionless surface, heavy like quicksilver. Below, in a mysterious twilight, green lights and shadows chased each other hither and thither. They looked down into a green nest, tapestried with moss and overhung with foliage. They took it into their foolish heads to go down and sit upon projecting stones within the well, where their feet touched the water, and where they could stay for hours without any one having the smallest suspicion of their whereabouts. Sometimes a vague terror assailed them; they fancied they heard other voices than their own—other sighs than those they themselves uttered. These sounds they could not explain, but they were all natural enough, and the slight terror they felt was only an additional attraction. The well, therefore, remained their old friend. Never had Justin suspected the reason of Miette's haste to draw the water in the morning. Sometimes he watched her afar off as she leaned over the curbstone.

"Lazy thing!" he would mutter. "She likes to play still, as if she were five years old!"

How could he suppose that on the other side of the wall a young gallant was looking in the water at the girl's smiling face, and that he was saying at that moment:

"If that ass of a Justin ill-treats you—he will hear from me!"

This amusement went on for a month. It was July; the mornings were intensely hot, and the coolness about the well was delicious. Miette came like the wind down the garden path—the short hairs about her forehead curling closely—she hardly took time to put her pitcher down. And Silvère, who was almost always there first, felt, as he saw her sudden reflection in the water, almost as if she had thrown herself into his arms at the end of a path.

Around them the sun shone, birds sang, and the loud hum of insects, among the flowers and vines on the old wall, filled the air with summer sounds. But they neither heard nor cared for this; they were in their cool, fresh solitude.

Sometimes Miette was in a teasing mood. She shook the rope and dashed the water about. Silvère implored her to be quiet, for he, of a more placid temperament than she, asked for no greater pleasure than looking at the reflection of his friend's face.

But she would not listen to him. She jested and teased, speaking in a hoarse voice, to which the echo gave a certain sweetness:

"No, no," she said, "I am ugly to-day; I am not Miette. See how hideous I am—!"

And she made the most frightful faces, laughing gayly at the fantastic reflection in the water.

One morning she was really angry. Silvère was not at the rendezvous, and she waited for him for a half hour. In vain did she make the pulley utter a most plaintive appeal. In vain did Silvère explain to her that he had been detained by Aunt Dide. To all his excuses she would only say:

"You have made me unhappy, and I do not wish to see you!"

The poor boy interrogated with despair this vacant mirror wherein he had so often seen the charming vision. He was compelled to leave without seeing Miette. The next day he was early at the interview, and gazed with melancholy eyes down into the well, saying to himself that he knew she would not come, when all at once he heard a rippling laugh, and her face flashed like a gleam of sunshine athwart the dusky surface of the water.

So much of his life did this well now fill, that never afterward did Silvère pass it, without a thrill from head to foot, and without seeing Miette's fair face.

These months of tenderness rescued the girl from her utter discouragement. She felt herself once more a child, and as if she had left far behind her the constraint and hardness of her life. The certainty that she was loved by some one—that she was no longer alone in the world—enabled her to endure Justin's taunts as well as those of

the ill-tempered children of the neighborhood. Within her heart was a melody which drowned the hisses. She thought of her father with the same tenderness, but without the thirst for vengeance. Her new-born love was like the fresh dawn coming after a feverish night.

She said to herself that she ought to retain her former discontented air, if she wished to prevent Justin from having any suspicions; but, notwithstanding all her efforts, her eyes were full of sweetness—the dark look of other days had vanished.

Justin said, one day, when he heard her singing:

“You seem very gay, La Chantegreil! I wonder what you have been doing?”

She shrugged her shoulders, but she trembled and tried to resume her rôle; it was long, therefore, before Justin was able to discover how she had escaped from his clutches.

Silvère, in his turn, was very happy; his daily interviews with Miette filled up the vacancy of his life. His long and silent tête-à-têtes with Aunt Dide were now employed in thinking over the events of the morning. He was quiet and secretive in temperament, and liked solitude.

At this time, too, he occupied himself in reading all the books he could get hold of. He read an immense amount of worthless trash, which would have singularly troubled his imagination, but for the absorbing affection which had taken possession of his whole nature.

At night, when he lighted his lamp and opened a dusty volume, which he took by chance from the shelf over his

bed, not a female character appeared in its pages that he did not at once compare with Miette. If he read a romance or a poem, he married Miette at the denoûment, or he died with her. If, on the contrary, it was some political pamphlet he read, some grave dissertation on political economy—which style of books he infinitely preferred to romances, as the half-educated generally prefer what they do not understand—he still found some way of interweaving the girl he loved, with this farrago of unintelligible words, for he said to himself that he was learning things which would teach him to be a more loving, tender husband when he was married. Miette, in his opinion, was essential to the abolition of Pauperism, and the definite triumph of the Revolution.

Weary as he was, he could not lay down the volume at times, and with eyes aching from the yellow, uncertain light of the lamp, he hung over the pages where the woman appeared always with the features of Miette. In him all his mother's nervousness had expanded into chronic enthusiasm—into a reaching and longing for all that was far off and unattainable. His solitary childhood, his semi-instruction, had developed to a singular degree the tendencies of his nature. But he was not yet of an age when a fixed idea plants its nail into the brain of a man. In the morning, after he had plunged his head into a pail of water, he remembered but vaguely the phantoms of the night before, and retained only his faith and ineffable tenderness. He was a child again, and ran to the well to bask in the smile of the girl he loved; and if sometimes he

met Aunt Dide's questioning eyes—she being troubled at his quiet thoughtfulness, and vaguely wondering if his feet had not strayed over the boundary of that land so familiar to her—he would kiss her on the cheek, with the assurance that he was thinking of the future.

But Miette and Silvère wearied a little at last of seeing only their shadows. They had exhausted their game, and they wished to meet face to face and roam the green fields with their arms about each other. Silvère said one day that he would jump over the wall and walk with her in the grounds; but the child was so disturbed by this threatened folly that he promised not to do it.

The wall in which the well was built formed an elbow, which was a most convenient shelter from intruders, and near by, and totally forgotten, was the door opened one night by Macquart and Adelaide. It was overgrown with green moss, and hung with ivy. The locks and hinges were rusty, and the key probably lost. The grass grew tall against it, proving that for years probably no one had passed through it. Silvère determined to look for the key. He well knew with what devotion Aunt Dide cherished all the relics of the past, and yet he looked the house through for a week without the smallest result. He tried to fit more than thirty keys to the lock—keys which he had picked up all through the house, and was becoming quite discouraged, when all at once he found the one of which he was in search. It was fastened by a ring to the key of the hall-door, which was always in the lock, and had hung there for forty years.

Aunt Dide had fingered it each day, but could not make up her mind to take it away.

When Silvère was certain that he held what he wanted in his hand, he waited until the next day to surprise Miette, from whom he had kept his plan entirely secret. In the morning, when he heard the child put down her pitcher, he softly unlocked the door, and, putting his head in, saw Miette perched on the edge of the well, looking down intently.

He called softly: "Miette! Miette!" She looked up, supposing him on the top of the wall, but when she beheld him not ten steps from her, she uttered a little cry of astonishment. It was midsummer and Assumption Day—the bells were ringing gayly.

Ah! how sweet it was to be together. They held each other's hands, and were about to say what they had never dared intrust to the echoing well, when all at once Silvère turned pale and drew back. He had just seen Aunt Dide standing in the doorway.

The grandmother had come quite by chance in that direction. When she saw the open space in that dark wall made by the door which Silvère had forgotten to close, she received a violent blow on the heart. This white opening seemed to her a chasm of light hewn violently through her black Past. She saw herself hurrying through it with eager, loving feet, and Macquart awaiting her. She clung to his neck, while the rising sun entered with her into the court by the door which she had not had time to close, and bathed them in its oblique rays.

The vision dazzled her with its brightness, awakening her from the sleep of old age, with its remorseless recollections.

The thought that this door could ever open again had never occurred to her. Macquart's death had forever walled it up. Had the well and the wall itself been swallowed in the earth, she could not have been more astonished.

She stood motionless, burning with indignation against the sacrilegious hand which, after violating the lock, had left the door open, like a yawning tomb. She would never have known the place. The old garden, with its beds of vegetables, had disappeared. Not a stone, not a tree that she remembered, and this spot where she had grown up, and which the evening before she had seen each time she closed her eyes, was now a desolate, blank space—a mere stubble-field. It seemed to her that her heart died again, and for the second time. She deeply regretted that she had responded to the summons of this open door, and was about to turn away without seeking to know more, when she perceived Miette and Silvère.

Another cruel pang was hers. For the second time the door had opened for a pair of lovers. It was the beginning of the end, with its present joys and its future tears! Aunt Dide saw only the tears, and a quick presentiment assailed her. Shaken by the remembrance of all she had suffered, and by the fear that future evils would yet come through this door, which she, so long ago, had rashly opened, she went forward silently and took her grandson

by the hand. Perhaps she might have left the children there, to talk in the shadow of the old wall, had she not felt herself to be their involuntary accomplice.

Miette snatched up her pitcher and fled, happy in her escape. Aunt Dide smiled faintly.

"She is very young," she murmured. "She has plenty of time."

She probably meant to say that Miette had plenty of time to suffer and to weep.

Then turning to Silvère, whose eyes were watching the child's fleet step, she said, quietly:

"Take care, my child; it kills sometimes!"

These were the only words she ever uttered on this event which had shaken her soul to its very foundation. When Silvère left the house, she locked the door and threw the key into the well, and then went back and looked at the wall, thankful to see that it looked as it had done, dark and immovable. The tomb was closed, covered by those boards, black and mouldy from dampness, and dotted with snail shells, like silver tears.

That evening Aunt Dide had one of those nervous attacks common with her, during which she often spoke in a loud, continuous voice; and as Silvère held her in his arms he heard disconnected words of which he caught only a few. She seemed to be crying out for vengeance on some one, and then she uttered a plaintive appeal for mercy. When the crisis came to an end she, as usual, shivered from head to foot with fear. She half-raised herself and looked into the corners with a wild, inquiring

gaze, and then fell back on the pillow with long sighs of dread and horror.

She drew Silvère closer to her, seeming to know him, and yet confounding him with some other person.

"They are there!" she stammered. "Do you see them? They have come to arrest you! They will kill you yet! Send them away; they hurt me, looking at me in this way!"

And she turned her face to the wall that she might not see these people of whom she spoke.

After a long silence she spoke again.

"You are close to me, my dear child, are you not? I entreat you not to leave me. We did very wrong when we cut through that wall, and I have suffered from that very day. I knew the door would work us some great ill, and now those poor children—think of their tears! They, too, will be killed—shot like dogs!"

She fell back into her cataleptic condition, and was no longer conscious of Silvère's being in the room. Suddenly she started up, and looked at the foot of the bed with an appalling expression of terror.

"Why did you not send them away?" she cried, as she hid her white head on the young man's breast. "They are always there, and the one with the gun is going to fire!"

A little later and she was sleeping that heavy sleep in which her attacks terminated.

The next day she seemed to have no recollection of what had taken place, and she never spoke to Silvère

of the morning when she had found him in the next garden.

The young people did not see each other for several days. But when Miette dared to go near the well again, she found Silvère waiting for her, who at once urged her to find some place where they could meet face to face. She did not require much urging, but agreed, with the laugh of a mischievous child, infinitely amused at the idea of outwitting Justin.

Silvère proposed all sorts of impracticable places. Miette shrugged her shoulders in high disdain, and told him she would find a place. The next morning at the well she told him to be in the rear of Saint-Mittre at ten o'clock.

All day long the girl's selection puzzled him very much, and his astonishment did not diminish as he threaded the narrow path among the boards.

"She will never come that way," he said to himself. Then he heard a rustling of branches behind the wall, and suddenly a laughing face and disordered hair above the wall.

"It is I!" she cried.

And it was Miette, indeed, who had climbed one of the mulberries which line the wall, at this very day. She jumped down on the flat tomb. Silvère watched her with delighted astonishment. He took her two hands and said:

"How clever you are! You can climb better than I."

And thus it was that they met for the first time in that

strange corner where subsequently they passed so many happy hours.

From this moment they saw each other nearly every night. The well served as a medium of communicating any changes of hours in their interviews, and all the little news which was too important in their eyes to admit of any delay; if one wished to communicate with the other, the pulley was put in motion: its sharp appeal was heard afar off.

Miette's room was above the kitchen, and had its own especial staircase. This enabled her to go out at any hour she pleased without being seen by her uncle or Justin.

What happy times were these! It was early in September, one of the most delicious months of the year in Provence. The lovers could not meet until after nine, and then Miette came over the wall like a bird, disdaining any assistance from Silvère. Her lover called her a tom-boy, but in his heart was delighted at her agility and determination. He watched her climb the wall with the complacency of a big boy looking on at the sports of his younger brother. There was much childishness in their budding tenderness, and one day they determined to go to the shores of La Viorne birds-nesting.

"You will see how I can climb trees," said Miette, proudly. "I can go up so high! so high! Did you ever rob magpies' nests? They are the hardest to get at!"

And then ensued a long discussion as to the best way of climbing poplars, Miette giving her opinion with all the ready coolness of a boy.

Silvère put his arm around her waist, and they walked up and down the path, all the time quarrelling as to whether they ought to put their feet or their hands in certain places on the branches. All the time they talked they felt a strange thrill of joy which the well had never afforded them. They concealed from each other the singular emotion each felt at the touch of the other. They yielded to their new sensations, all the time talking, like two school-boys, of the birds' nests which were most difficult to attain.

They paced up and down this narrow path, where they felt thoroughly at home already. Miette, happy in her discovery, insisted on being complimented upon it.

"We might have gone a full league," she said, "and not hit on such a hiding-place."

Thick grass deadened the sound of their steps. They were enveloped in foliage, and could see but a narrow strip of deep blue sky, set thick with stars, above their heads. The spot was so quiet and so secluded that involuntarily they lowered their voices, though no one could hear them, as they told each other the thousand nothings of the day.

At other times they, like two children, climbed every pile of boards, and Silvère frightened Miette by telling her that Justin was certainly watching them from behind the wall. Then she would gravely walk by his side, as all out of breath she would declare that some day they must have a run in the meadow, and see which could catch the other.

They would linger in this place until midnight, while

the town slept, and the windows in the Faubourg were extinguished one by one.

Never were they disturbed in their solitude. At this hour there were no children playing at hide-and-go-seek among the boards. Sometimes the young lovers would hear the distant song of a band of workmen, and on warm evenings see an occasional couple or an old man seated by the side of the road. When the evenings grew cooler, Saint-Mittre was deserted, except for the Gypsy camp and its fires, before which flitted black shadows. The calm air of the night brought them an occasional phrase or word—the good-night of a bourgeois as he closed his door, or the rattling of an obtrusive blind. And when Plassans was all quiet they heard the Gypsies quarrelling, the crackling of their fire, and the guttural voices of the young girls, as they sang in an unknown tongue. But the lovers did not care to linger outside at the end of their beloved walk. They hastened back to it, feeling as free there—not more than fifty feet from the Roman gate—as if they were in some nook on the mountain side. The only sound which caused them any emotion was that of the clock striking.

When the hour sounded, they pretended not to hear, and sometimes they stopped short, if they wished to argue the point. They could have chatted and played until morning, but Miette would reluctantly decide at last to climb her wall once more; but even then there was further delay, for she lingered with her elbows planted on the top sustained by the mulberry branches, which served her as

a ladder. Silvère, standing on the tomb, could reach her hands. They repeated over and over again their good-nights, but always had a few last words to say.

At last Silvère was the one to exclaim,

“It is midnight; we must go.”

Then Miette, with girlish obstinacy, would insist that he should leave first; she wished to see him go down the path; but he was equally determined to know that she was safe on the ground, away from those perilous branches; and as the young man would not yield, she, to punish him, would say:

“And now I am going to jump!”

Silvère held his breath as he listened to the dull thud of her leap, and to the little laugh with which she fled. He watched her shadow glance past the rifts of moonlight, and then slowly and reluctantly turned away himself.

This was the life of these young people for two years. No frosts nor snows, no wintry cold kept them within doors. Miette wore her voluminous pelisse, and they laughed at the bad weather. When the air was keen and struck their faces like slender wands, they did not sit down. They walked up and down, wrapped in the pelisse. One night they made a huge ball of snow and rolled it into a corner, where it remained for nearly a month.

Rain did not alarm them either. Silvère would hurry through the most terrible down-pour, saying that Miette certainly would not come, and when Miette arrived, drenched to her skin, he forgot to scold her.

He finally arranged a little roof, which was movable, of

slanting boards among the piles of planks, under whose shelter they could sit side by side, listening to the pattering of the rain above their heads. In no other place were they so happy; a deluge ran past their feet, but they were warm in the pelisse. For hours they would sit there with that love of the rain which makes little girls walk gravely up and down under an umbrella. In fact they rather preferred the nights to be rainy, and yet this weather gave additional pain to their parting, for neither could hear the steps of the other. As soon as Miette was over the wall, only the rush of the water could be heard, and they were uneasy until they met, lest something had happened.

But Spring came again. April brought soft nights, and the grass grew green once more. In this awaking of all living things, the young lovers sometimes regretted their wintry solitude, which enabled them to feel so far from every human being. The long twilights were tedious to them, as Miette could not climb the wall until it was quite dark, and when it was safe for her to do this they no longer found the perfect solitude which had so delighted them.

The children in the neighborhood played until late on the boards, and sometimes one or more hid behind the very place where Miette and Silvère were sitting. The fear of being surprised, and the noises around them, rendered them very uneasy.

Then they found the narrow path too confined as the season advanced. The grass came up to their knees, and as they trampled it under their feet certain plants exhaled intoxicating odors. Then with eyes half closed, they

would lean against the wall, wondering whence came this strange lassitude.

They finally decided that their cherished retreat was too close, and they determined to extend their walks into the country.

Miette came with her pelisse. They stole along the walls until they reached the highway and the open fields, where the air rolled in like the waves of the sea, and dissipated the languor caused by the tall grasses in Saint-Mittre.

They explored the whole country round about for two Summers. Each rock, each grassy bank and clump of trees, was known to them. They realized all their dreams—they ran their race in the meadow—and Silvère had great difficulty in catching Miette.

They found their birds' nests, too. These amusements appeased the fever in their blood, and they played like two happy children let loose from school. The whole country belonged to them; Miette, with a woman's easy conscience, never hesitated to gather a bunch of raisins, a branch of green almonds, or any fruit that came in her way, which quite shocked Silvère, but he did not dare scold the girl.

"The bad little thing!" he would say to himself, quite desperate, and, dramatizing the situation, "she will certainly make a thief of me!"

Miette made him eat half the fruit she stole. And he became very adroit in avoiding the fruit trees and vineyards. He compelled her at times to sit by his side, and then it was that she complained of suffocating. They listened

to the water of the river running between the overhanging willows; the hum of the locusts came up to them from the valley below, the sky glittered with stars, and in this great solitude the children sat hand in hand.

Silvère, who vaguely realized their danger, occasionally started up with a proposal that they should try and reach one of the little islands in the middle of the river. Miette would not allow Silvère to carry her, and it more than once happened that she slipped and fell, but as the water was very shallow, it did not much matter.

When they reached the island, they would lie on the strip of sand which encircled it, their eyes nearly on a level with the water, which sparkled in silvery ripples. Miette declared that she was in a boat, and that it was certainly moving, and they began to sing the rhythmic cadence which they had heard from the boatmen.

One island in especial had a clump of trees overhanging the water. The children seated themselves on the gnarled roots and splashed their bare feet in the quiet pool below.

These foot-baths put a notion into Miette's head, which was full of danger to their childish innocence. She had long wished to learn to swim. She had found the very spot, and Silvère must teach her; but Silvère raised objections. It was not wise, they would be seen, she might take cold, and so on; but the real reason was, that he could not see where they would undress and dress, nor how he was to hold her in the water.

But the girl did not seem to think of any difficulties.

The very next night she appeared in a bathing dress which she had made from an old woollen skirt. Silvère went home for some flannel drawers. The arrangements were very simple. Miette went a step or two aside; the night was so dark that she stood against the willows, a vague white shadow, for only a second or two. Silvère stood like a young oak, while the arms and legs of the girl looked like the milky stems of some of the river-reeds.

They entered the water, with little outcries at its coldness. All Silvère's scruples and fears were forgotten in this new game, which lasted for an hour. They threw the water over each other, and Silvère gave the first swimming lesson. He held her by her belt, and she, furiously agitating both arms and legs, fancied herself swimming; but when he withdrew his support, she would utter little shrieks of terror and snatch at his arm. "Hold me closer!" she cried.

After this first bath, Silvère was ashamed of having had any fears. "Miette was such a child, and so full of gayety!" he said to himself.

In a fortnight she could swim, and, rocked by the waves, she could revel in the summer silence and the overhanging sky. The shadows on the shore enchanted her. She liked to swim toward an open space, where the moonlight fell, calm and still, the water growing more ruffled as she approached, with circles gradually enlarging until they were lost under the willows, from whence came soft whispers and rustles. When she floated on her back, the sky above was more beautiful still, and from the

far-off horizon, which she could not see, she heard the appeal of a solemn voice and the sighs of the night.

She was not dreamy by nature; she enjoyed the heaven, the river, the shadows and the moonlight with all her senses. She adored the river, and, as she swam against the current, she loved to feel the water press strongly against her breast and limbs. She would pass from the shining water, which reflected the moon, into the blackest shadow, with a little shiver, as if she had left a sunny plain at mid-day and felt the chill of the shady trees.

She would no longer allow Silvère to touch her in the water. She swam silently at his side, moving farther away when she felt an accidental touch.

When they left the bath, they were often strangely troubled. Miette took an hour to dress; she would put on her chemise and skirt, and lie down on the turf complaining of intense fatigue, and bidding Silvère, who was equally disturbed, take a seat by her side.

Fortunately, the girl declared one night that she would take no more baths. She said the water was so cold that the blood rushed to her head. She gave this reason in all innocence.

They resumed their old talks; and of the danger which they had run, nothing remained in Silvère's mind, except an intense admiration for Miette's physical vigor. She could now swim as well as himself. He adored strength and bodily exercise, and felt a marvellous esteem for her beautiful strong arms. He treated her, in short, more as another youth, like himself, than as a girl, and these very

rough plays protected them and prevented them from marring the beauty of their love.

In Silvère's affection for Miette was much of the kindness he felt toward all that were unhappy. He could never see a beggar—a sick man crouched by the road-side—a child walking bare-foot on the rough stones—without a choking in his throat.

He loved Miette, because no one else loved her—because her life was so lonely—and because she was regarded almost as a pariah. His dreams in regard to her were full of generous folly. He wished to raise himself, that he might raise her, for he looked upon her as his future wife, and upon himself as fulfilling a sacred mission; his brain was so bewildered by his mystic socialism, that he went so far as to imagine Miette seated on a throne, and all the village bowing before her, begging her pardon and singing her praises. But he forgot all this nonsense when Miette jumped from the wall, or said to him on the highway:

“Let us run! You will never catch me!”

But if the young man's waking dreams were of the glorification of his beloved, his sense of justice was so keen that he often brought tears to her eyes when he talked of her father. The girl, in spite of the tenderness with which her love for Silvère had filled her heart, still had her bad hours, when the rebellion of her ardent nature sent the light from her eyes and the smiles from her lips.

She maintained, then, that her father had an absolute

right to kill the gendarme, that the land belonged to one man as much as to another, and that a poor man has a right to shoot down his game wherever he can find it. Then Silvère gravely explained the Law, as he understood it, and with commentaries so strange that, had the worthy magistrates of Plassans heard them, they would have gasped with horror.

These talks took place generally in some quiet corner in the open fields. The grassy carpet of a rich green, extended as far as the eye could stretch, without a single tree to break its surface. The sky, with its numberless stars, was far above them. Miette was by no means disposed to yield her side of the argument; she asked if her father ought to have stood still and allowed himself to be killed by the gendarme. Silvère hesitated a moment, and then said that it was better to be a victim than a murderer—that it was a great misfortune to kill a fellow-creature even in legitimate self-defence. In his own eyes, he said, the law was a sacred thing, and he thought the judges who condemned Chantegreil were right. The girl grew furious, and cried out that his heart was no better than the others; and as he continued to defend his opinion, she burst into tears and said, between her sobs, that he would blush for her whenever he recalled her father's crime.

But Miette's tears were not an absolute proof that Silvère's arguments had convinced her, or that her heart was softened by them, for a certain bitterness lay dormant in the depths of her heart, as was once shown by her

telling, with demoniac delight, how one day she had seen a gendarme fall from his horse and break his leg.

About this time, too, she confided to Silvère that she thought Justin had found out why she sang nowadays, and why she smiled.

“Never mind!” she added. “If he comes to disturb us, we will receive him in such a way that he will never interfere with us again!”

Sometimes the girl was too tired for a long country walk, and then they returned to their beloved Saint-Mittre, to the narrow path which was sweet and fresh and free from the intoxicating odors which in midsummer had disturbed their senses.

They sat on the old tomb with a comfortable sense of being at home. They loved to talk of the old Cemetery, and with their lively imaginative natures they said their love had grown like a beautiful plant from out this corner fertilized by Death. It had grown like a weed—flourished like those poppies which the least breath of air shook on their slender stems; and they told each other in timid whispers, that the whispers among trees, the soft breeze that touched their foreheads, the shiver that swept over the trees, were so many ghosts who had returned to earth, eager to recommence their earthly lives. They believed that were they to come there no more, the Cemetery would bewail their absence, and that the blades of grass that twisted around their ankles were slender fingers reaching from the tomb, eager to retain them. But the children were never horrified by these strange fancies; they felt

themselves surrounded by invisible friends; they were simply saddened and at a loss to comprehend the vague wishes and commands of the dead.

Miette, with her feminine instincts, delighted in all dismal subjects. Silvère had found several bones and a skull. At each new discovery Miette was thrilled. If the bone was small, she declared it to be that of some beautiful young girl who had died of a fever just before her marriage. If the bone was large, she said it belonged to some old man—a soldier—or a judge! The tombstone near the wall always interested them. On one clear moonlight night Miette discovered some letters on its surface. She insisted on Silvère at once removing the moss, and then they both read the inscription:

“Cy—gist—Marie—morte—”

Miette, finding her name on this stone, was greatly troubled. Silvère called her “a simpleton;” but she could not keep back her tears. She said she knew she should soon die, and that this was her grave. The young man was chilled in his turn, but he reproached the child for her folly.

“What! Could this be she—little Miette—who was always so courageous!”

They ended by laughing together, and each determined never to say any more about this tomb; but when the gray autumnal nights came, Miette was the first to speak of this dead Marie, this unknown girl with whose resting-place they were so strangely familiar.

One night Miette earnestly entreated Silvère to turn over the flat stone and see what was underneath. He refused, saying it would be a sacrilege, and this refusal concentrated Miette's thoughts still more on the dear phantom whose name she bore.

She wondered if she had died when she was just her age—

"Listen to me, Silvère," said Miette. "When you are dead I shall come here to die, and I should like this stone to be laid over my body."

Silvère, with a choking in his throat, begged her to think of something more cheerful. But both carried from this Cemetery the vague presentiment of a short life. A voice whispered to them that they would die before their marriage had crowned their lives.

It was undoubtedly this tomb, and the constant association with the Cemetery, which made them talk on that cold December night, as they sat above the road to Orchères, and watched the Insurgents marching on, of their desire to lie together in some deep grave.

Miette slept softly, with her head on Silvère's shoulder, and at daybreak awoke with a start. Before them the valley lay white in the dawn—the sun, however, was still behind the hills—along the horizon ran a streak of light. Afar off the Viorne, like a white satin ribbon, wound through red and yellow fields just tilled; gray masses of olive trees, vineyards and farm-houses, stood out in the cold morning air, and the fresh wind blew full in the faces of the children. They started to their feet, cheered by

the brightness of the morning. They looked about with eager eyes, and listened to the ringing of the bells.

"I have slept delightfully!" cried Miette. "I dreamed you kissed me. Did you kiss me?"

"I think it quite possible," answered Silvère, with a laugh. "But it was frightfully cold."

"Yes; my feet ache."

"Then let us run; we have at least two leagues to go."

They hurried to the highway; but where they stood they looked back to the rock as if to bid it farewell. But they said nothing of the burning kiss they had there exchanged, but walked on, the young man selecting the best and shortest roads; for he had often been sent by his master to Orchères. They went much more than two leagues, and Miette accused him of having made a mistake; but at last they came out of a narrow lane directly in front of Orchères, and at the same moment heard the outcries of a crowd, for the insurrectionary band were just entering the town. Miette and Silvère entered with them. Never had they seen so much enthusiasm. In the streets it was like some great fête day. The Insurgents were met as if they were liberators. Men embraced each other, and the women brought food and drink, and on the doorsteps stood old men who wept. The Southern character was shown in their shouting, singing and dancing. Silvère's ideas of death and discouragement were set aside for the time. He had wished to fight and sell his life as dearly as possible. Now he thought only of Victory, of living

joyfully with Miette, and of the great peace of the universal Republic.

This fraternal reception of the inhabitants of Orchères was the last joy of the Insurgents. The day passed in boundless hopes. The prisoners, the Mayor, Commandant, and several others, were placed in a large room overlooking the square. From the windows they contemplated, with shocked surprise, the enthusiasm of the crowd.

"Would to heaven," murmured the Commandant, leaning over the window-sill as if it were the cushioned velvet of a box at the theatre, "that I had two or three cannon! I would soon clear out this rabble."

Then catching a glimpse of Miette, he addressed the Mayor:

"Look there!" he said; "look at that girl all in red. It is a positive disgrace. They have literally brought their creatures with them. A little more of this, and we shall see strange things."

The Mayor shook his head, and talked about "passions unchained" and "the darkest hour of our national history."

"Pray be quiet, sir," said another of the prisoners; "or you will have us all massacred!"

The truth was, these gentlemen were treated with the greatest possible gentleness, and given a most excellent dinner, but to cowards like most of the prisoners, these very attentions were full of direful meaning. They could only be treated so well that they might be tenderer and fatter when the proper day came to eat them!

At twilight Silvère came face to face with his cousin, Dr. Pascal, who was worshipped by all these men. He had followed them, making the most unremitting efforts to turn them from their object. Then, as if convinced by their arguments, he said:

"You are perhaps right, my friends; fight if you choose. I shall be here to mend your legs and your arms."

And all that morning he gathered specimens from the stones on the roadside, and was quite desperate that he had not brought with him his geologist's hammer and his botany box. His pockets were full of stones when he met his nephew, and he carried a bundle of green things under his arm.

"Hallo!" he cried, as he saw Silvère. "Is that you? I thought I was the only one of my family here."

He uttered these words with faint sarcasm, for he could not quite pardon his father and his Uncle Antoine. Silvère was glad to see his cousin, for the Doctor was the only one of the Rougon family who greeted him with any cordiality, or even spoke to him when they met in the street. The young man seeing him with the Insurgents, and covered with dust, naturally supposed him to be allied to the Republican cause, and at once began to talk of the Right, of the people, of the Holy Cause, and of the certain Victory, with boyish heat and emphasis.

Pascal listened silently, watching with a smiling face the play of the lad's features, as if he were studying a subject, dissecting an enthusiasm to see what lay at the bottom.

"Upon my word!" he muttered; "you are your grandmother's descendant, indeed!"

And he added in a low voice, in the tone of a chemist taking notes:

"Hysteria or sincere enthusiasm. Absurd folly or sublime unselfishness. Devil take these nerves!"

And then as if thinking aloud, he added:

"The family record is complete. It will have a hero!"

Silvère had not heard, for he was still talking of his dear Republic. Miette was a little in advance—she did not leave her lover for a moment. This girl, wrapped in her ruddy garments, puzzled the Doctor. He suddenly interrupted Silvère.

"Who is that girl?" he asked.

"My wife," answered the boy, gravely.

The Doctor opened his eyes, but as he was always timid and embarrassed with women, he said nothing to Miette, but lifted his hat with great courtesy as he passed her.

The night was a restless, uneasy one. The enthusiasm of the Insurgents was passing away, and in the morning clouded faces were on every side.

Disastrous rumors were in circulation that Paris was conquered, the Province tied hand and foot, that troops had left Marseilles and were advancing under the orders of Colonel Masson and of the Prefect. There was a great awakening, full of anger and despair. These men, who were burning the evening before with patriotic fervor, were chilled by seeing France submissively kneeling. They looked on themselves as rebels, and they could be driven away by musket-shots like wild beasts; and they had dreamed of a great war, the rising of a People, and a brilliant Victory!

Then this handful of men threw away their arms in discouragement, and sat down on the side of the highway, saying that they would there await the balls that should lay them dead, and in that way show their faith in Republicanism.

Although these men had now nothing before them but exile or death, there were few desertions. They stood firmly together; it was against their chiefs that their anger was directed. They complained of their incapacity and of the irreparable faults they had committed. The Insurgents were now under the command of irresolute men, and at the mercy of the first soldiers who presented themselves.

They spent two days at Orchères, losing their time and aggravating their situation. Their General, hesitating under the tremendous responsibility which now devolved upon him, decided that to linger longer at Orchères was dangerous, and about one o'clock gave the order for departure, and led his little army to the heights of Sainte-Roure, which was a defensible position. Sainte-Roure spreads its houses upon the flank of a hill; behind the town enormous blocks of stone shut out the horizon. This citadel, so to speak, is reached only by the Plaine des Nores.

An esplanade used as a race-course, shaded by superb elms, overlooks the plain. It was on this esplanade that the Insurgents encamped. The night was black and lowering. A rumor of treason was buzzed about, and at day-break the band was passed in review. The Contingents stood in straight lines, with their back to the plain. They were clad in all sorts of costumes—brown coats and blue

blouses, drawn around the waist by red belts. Their arms, equally diverse, glittered in the clear sunlight. At this moment a sentinel, who had been forgotten in the olive-grove, ran toward them, crying,

“The soldiers! the soldiers!”

The Insurgents, greatly excited, and forgetful of all discipline, threw themselves forward, eager to see the soldiers. The ranks were broken, and when the troops appeared from behind the gray olives, marching down upon them, there was a panic from one end to the other of the little band; but in the centre a wood-cutter shouted out, waving his red cravat as he spoke:

“Here Chavanos! Saint-Eutrope! Here Tulettes! Here Plassans!”

The villages summoned by the wood-cutter united under the elms, grouped contrary to all rules of strategy, but ready to prevent the passage of the soldiers. Plassans was in the centre of this heroic battalion. Among the gray blouses and the glitter of their arms, the red pelisse worn by Miette stood out like a large scarlet spot, or like a gaping wound.

There was suddenly a great silence. At one of the windows of the room where the prisoners were confined appeared a white head.

“Go back; close the shutters!” cried the Insurgents, furiously; “you will certainly be killed.”

The shutters were closed, and not a sound was heard save the measured tread of the soldiers as they approached.

A minute, which seemed interminable, elapsed. The

soldiers were hidden behind a rising in the ground ; but soon the Insurgents saw the points of their bayonets glittering in the sunlight, and shivering like a field of wheat blown by the wind. Silvère thought he saw the gendarme whose blood had stained his hands. He knew from his companions that he had not killed the man, but that he had deprived him of the sight of one eye. The sudden recollection of this man, of whom he had not thought since he left Plassans, was insupportable. He wondered if it were fear he felt. He grasped his carabine, a mist passed over his eyes, yet he saw the bayonets slowly and steadily approaching.

Silvère turned toward Miette, who, with a flushed face, was standing on tip-toe to see the soldiers. Nervous expectation had dilated her nostrils ; her red lips were parted over her teeth, white, like those of a young lioness.

A quick discharge of musketry was heard. The Insurgents felt a great wind pass over their heads, followed by a shower of green leaves, cut off by the bullets from the branches of the elms.

A hollow noise, like that of a tree falling, induced Silvère to look around. The stout wood-cutter, who was a head taller than any of his companions, lay on the ground with a bullet through his forehead.

Silvère discharged his carabine, loaded and fired it again, without stopping to take aim, and with but one idea, to kill something or somebody. The smoke rose from among the soldiers, and the leaves continued to fall on the Insurgents, for the soldiers fired too high.

Occasionally, above the musketry, the young man heard a long groan, a hoarse cry, and there was a vacant spot for a moment in the little band.

For ten minutes the firing continued, and then a voice was heard.

"Save yourselves, if you can!" were the words, followed by a mad yell of rage and the exclamations:

"Cowards! cowards!"

The General fled, and the cavalry were cutting down the sharp-shooters on the plain.

A rough voice said that it was better to die where they were, but the first voice repeated:

"Save yourselves, if you can!"

The men then ran away, leaping over the dead bodies, until not more than a dozen were left, out of which number five were almost immediately killed.

The two children did not move. As the battalion diminished, the higher did Miette raise her flag; she held it like a huge candle straight before her. It was riddled with shot.

When Silvère had no more cartridges in his pocket, he looked at his carabine with a dazed sort of air. A shadow passed over his face as if a colossal bird had brushed past his forehead. He looked up and saw that the flag had dropped from Miette's hands. The child with both hands clasped against her breast, and her head thrown back, with an expression of acute suffering, was slowly falling to the ground. She did not utter one sound. The flag was her resting-place.

“Quick!” said Silvère, trying to lift her, “we must run!”

But she did not move; her eyes were wide open.

“You are wounded!” cried Silvère, beside himself with fear.

She did not speak. She seemed to be stifling.

He tore open her dress, but could see no wound. His eyes were blind with tears. At last, under the left breast, he saw a tiny hole with one single drop of blood.

“It is nothing!” he sobbed. “I will find Doctor Pascal: he will cure you. If you could only get up. Can you not rise?”

The soldiers had ceased firing. They threw themselves now on the few remaining rebels sword in hand. In the centre of this vacant esplanade Miette and Silvère were alone. In utter desperation the youth tried to lift her, but the child uttered such a sigh of pain that he laid her gently down again.

“Speak to me!” he prayed. “Why do you say nothing?”

But she could not reply. Her fluttering hands seemed to say that it was not her fault. Her lips were rapidly becoming pinched by the hand of Death. Her loosened hair lay over the red folds of the flag; and only her eyes were living—shining in her white face. Silvère sobbed. In those great eyes he read a despairing longing for life. They said to him that Miette was going away all alone without ever having been his wife. They were full of reproach, and Silvère understood them only too well.

He remembered the burning kiss they had exchanged, and in despair and agony he pressed his lips upon that virgin bosom, which he saw for the first time. He murmured, amid his sobs :

“No, no, this is nothing. Do not speak if it hurts you. Wait a moment, I will raise your head ; and then I will try and warm your hands. They are so cold.”

The discharge of musketry recommenced in the olive grove, but Silvère did not hear it. Nor did he see Pascal, who came hurrying toward him thinking he was wounded. As soon as the young man realized who it was, he cried :

“Save her ! She is wounded under the left breast ! How thankful I am that you are here ! You will save her !”

At this moment a light convulsion passed over the face of the dying girl. A dark shadow settled down upon it, and from her half open lips came a little sigh. Her eyes, still wide open, were fixed upon the young man.

Pascal leaned over her, and then said, in a low voice :

“She is dead.”

“Dead !” The word stunned Silvère as if it had been a clap of thunder.

“Dead ! Dead !” he repeated ; “it is not true ! She is looking at me—you can see yourself that she is looking at me !”

And he caught the physician by the arm, entreating him not to go away—insisting that she was not dead, and that he must save her. Pascal answered him affectionately :

"I cannot stay, for others need me. Believe me, the poor child is really dead."

"Dead!" The words resounded through the youth's brain. Miette still looked at him. He threw himself upon the corpse, covering it with kisses, but the child was stiff and cold.

All at once he was overwhelmed with terror. He staggered to some little distance and crouched on the ground, saying, over and over again :

"She is dead—but she sees me! She will never shut her eyes; she will look at me always!"

This idea soothed the sharpness of his grief.

Meanwhile the Cavalry cut down all the fugitives—but Silvère knew nothing of what was going on about him. He did not see his cousin, who came to bring the carabine Silvère had thrown aside. Pascal knew it from having seen it hanging over Aunt Dide's chimney; but when he saw that the boy paid no attention to him, Pascal took it away to the Hotel de la Mule Blanche, where the prisoners were incarcerated.

Then ensued a horrible massacre. Colonel Masson and the Prefect vainly ordered a retreat; the soldiers were furious, and they bayoneted the Contingents wherever they were found, and when they could see no more enemies, they riddled the façade of the hotel with balls. The shutters were shivered, as were the windows. Lamentable outcries were heard:

"The prisoners! The prisoners!" shouted the Prefect.

But the soldiers paid no attention to these words, and the

Commandant appeared at the window, shaken by a hurricane of indignation; by his side was Monsieur Pierotte, one of the prisoners. There was a discharge of musketry, and Pierotte fell dead.

Silvère and Miette still looked at each other. The young man did not hear anything that was going on. He knew only that men were gathering about them, and he drew the folds of the red flag over Miette's naked bosom.

But the contest was over. A gendarme in search of another victim, perceiving Silvère under the trees, ran toward him; but seeing that he was only a child, he said:

"What on earth are you doing here, boy?"

Silvère, with his eyes still on Miette, did not answer.

"The little scamp!" exclaimed the soldier; "his hands are all black with powder. Up with you, sir; you will soon be dealt with!"

And as Silvère did not move, the gendarme perceived that the body that lay before them was that of a woman.

"A beautiful girl!" he muttered. "It is a great pity, to be sure. But she could not have been your mistress—you are too young."

He jerked Silvère violently to his feet, and pulled him off as he would have done a dog.

Silvère made no resistance, but, turning half around, kept his eyes fixed on Miette as long as he could. He was desperate at the idea of leaving her alone under the trees. His last look showed her to him lying among the folds of the red flag, with her large eyes still wide open.

CHAPTER VI.

SHREWDNESS AND COURAGE.

ROUGON, about five o'clock that same morning, ventured out from his mother's, whom he left asleep in her chair. He stole down to the end of Saint-Mittre. Not a sound, nor a shadow. He went on to the Roman gate, standing wide open. Plassans was still asleep, and might have been taken for a Dead City. Rougon, with growing confidence, continued his investigation. He uttered at last a long sigh of relief. The Insurgents had vanished like a nightmare, and had abandoned Plassans. The town was his own. Silent and confiding, he had but to stretch out his hand and take it. He stood motionless, with folded arms, in the attitude of a great captain on the eve of victory. Afar off, he heard the ripple of the fountains, as the water fell into their basins. A new anxiety assailed him. Suppose the Empire had been achieved without him! His brow was beaded with cold perspiration at this idea. He hurried on, hoping that Félicité would be able to give him all the details of what had occurred.

As he turned the corner of the street, he came full in front of his house. He rubbed his eyes. What did he see? The windows of the yellow salon were brilliantly lighted, and a form, which he recognized as that of his

wife, was leaning from the window, and wildly gesticulating. He could not understand what this meant, when all at once a hard something fell at his feet. Félicité had thrown him the key of the room where he had hidden a supply of guns. This key signified clearly that he was to use these guns. He at once retreated, unable to divine why his wife had prevented him from entering the house.

He went at once to find Rondier, who lived at the other end of the town and was completely ignorant of the events of the night, but was up and dressed, and entirely ready to march. Pierre proposed that they should go together and see Granoux.

The servant of this gentleman was very reluctant to admit them, and they heard the poor man saying, in a tone of piteous terror:

"Look out what you do, Catherine; the streets are infested with brigands."

He was in his bed-room, and had no light. When he recognized his friends, he was relieved, but would not allow a lamp to be brought to the room, lest it should serve as a mark for some bullet. He insisted that the town was in the hands of the rebels, and he groaned and moaned.

"You know nothing about it," he said; "I tried to sleep, but they made a most infernal racket! Then I threw myself into this chair, by the window, where I could look out. Such vile faces—such ferocious-looking creatures! And when they passed by here they carried with them all our best friends as prisoners, and uttered cries like cannibals."

Rougon was delighted. He made Granoux repeat over and over again whom he had seen in the clutches of these brigands.

"I tell you I saw them all," said the good man, almost weeping. "It is perfectly outrageous. I heard what they said, too, as they passed under my window."

Rondier calmed the old man by assuring him that the town was free. When he learned this, and that Rougon had come in order that he should assist in saving Plassans, he was at once filled with warlike ardor. The three saviours deliberated, and finally decided to summon their friends, and all meet in the room where their arms were stored. Rougon was still disturbed by Félicité's strange gestures, and scented some unknown snare. Granoux, the dullest of the three, was the first to say that some Republicans must have been left in the town.

These words were as a revelation to Rougon, who at once said to himself:

"Yes; and a Macquart is among them."

In another hour they were in their improvised Armory. They had gone quietly from door to door, and collected as many men as possible; but there were only thirty-nine, all numbered, who came with disordered dress and pale faces. The room, in which they assembled, was encumbered with old hoops and dilapidated barrels. The guns lay in three long boxes in the centre. A wax taper, on a bit of board, lighted this strange scene in a dim, uncertain sort of way. When Rougon lifted the covers off the three cases, the scene was at once sinister and grotesque. Above

the guns, whose shining barrels reflected a bluish light, necks were elongated, and heads were bowed with a certain secret horror, while on the walls the yellow light of the taper threw gigantic shadows of exaggerated noses and disordered hair.

Meanwhile this reactionary band hesitated. A father spoke of his children, and others, without offering any excuse, edged toward the door. But two conspirators came in, and these knew that in the Hotel de Ville, not more than twenty of the Republicans remained. Forty-one against twenty struck them in a favorable light. The arms were distributed. It was Rougon who did this, and each of these men as he took his gun, whose muzzle, on this cold December night, was like ice, felt a great chill creep over him.

The shadows on the wall bore a grotesque resemblance to embarrassed conscripts. Pierre closed the boxes with a sigh. He had one hundred and nine guns there which he would most gladly have distributed. Then he took out the cartridges, of which there were two huge hogsheads, enough to defend Plassans against an army. They filled their pockets, and when they had loaded their guns they stood looking at each other a moment, their eyes full of cowardly cruelty.

They crept along the side of the houses in single file like savages, Rougon at their head. The hour had come for him to risk his person if he wished his plans to succeed. He carried his head high, but there was a deadly sinking at his heart.

Suddenly the column came to an abrupt standstill. They fancied they heard distant martial sounds, but it was only the small copper plates, hung by chains, used by the barbers of the South as signs, rattling in the wind.

After this halt the preservers of Plassans resumed their cautious march, and soon reached the Hotel de Ville, where they grouped themselves about Rougon, deliberating once more. Opposite them the whole façade of the Hotel was black, except one window. It was then about seven o'clock, and day was breaking.

After a discussion of some ten minutes it was decided that they should go to the door and investigate. Perhaps they would be able to discover the occasion of this ominous silence. The door was partially open; one of the investigators looked in and came back, saying that he had seen a man sitting there asleep with a gun between his knees. Rougon determined to take advantage of this, and crept in, snatched the gun, and with the assistance of two of his companions bound and gagged the man.

This first success, achieved with such adroitness, and in such profound silence, singularly encouraged the little band, who had imagined much slaughter and a terrible uproar.

Rougon was compelled to insist that the demonstrations of their joy should be most quiet. They advanced slowly, and in the room on the left they found about fifteen men asleep and snoring by the expiring light of a lantern hung against the wall. Rougon, who had developed into a great general, left half his men in the corridor, outside this door,

with directions not to awaken these sleepers, but to treat them with respect, and to make them prisoners if they moved.

Our friends then proceeded to ascertain the meaning of the lighted window they had seen from the square. It was this which troubled Rougon, for he scented Macquart. He crept up the stairs softly, followed by his twenty heroes.

Macquart was in the Mayor's private room, seated in his arm-chair, and with his elbows on the Mayor's own desk. After the departure of the Insurgents, he was so absolutely certain of victory that he felt he had nothing to do but to take triumphant possession. In his eyes, this band of three thousand men, which had passed through the town, was an invincible army. The National Guard was dismembered, the Quartier of the Nobles quivering with fear, and the shopkeepers in the New Quartier had never touched a gun in their lives. They had no arms, he said to himself, and did not even take the trouble to close the gates; and while his men slept calmly, he waited tranquilly until daylight, when he thought all the Republicans in the country would gather around him.

He contemplated strong Revolutionary measures—the nomination of a Commune, of which he should be the chief; the imprisonment of the bad patriots, and more particularly of all the people whom he disliked. The thought of the Rougon faction vanquished—the yellow salon deserted—of all that clique asking favors of him—gave him the sweetest joy. He determined to issue a

proclamation to the inhabitants of Plassans. He dictated it, and when it was finished reclined in his arm-chair, and ordered it to be read aloud before it was sent to be printed.

The Proclamation commenced thus :

“CITIZENS OF PLASSANS: The hour of your Independence has sounded. The reign of Justice has arrived.”

A noise at the door of the room was slowly opened.

“Is that you?” asked Macquart, interrupting the reader.

There was no answer, but the door opened still further.

“Come in,” said Macquart, impatiently. “Did you find my scamp of a brother at home?”

Then suddenly the door, which opened in the middle, flew apart and struck against the wall on either side, a rush of armed men filled the room, with Rougon at their head.

“The scoundrels! they have guns after all,” howled Macquart.

He tried to snatch a pair of pistols that lay on the desk, but there were five men ready to spring at his throat. The combatants were singularly embarrassed by their guns, which were useless to them, and yet which they dared not lay down. In the contest Rougon’s gun went off accidentally, filling the room with smoke: the ball crashed a superb mirror over the chimney. This sudden report stunned everybody, and put an end to the battle. All at once came a noise from the court-yard. Granoux ran to the window, anxious to discover what was going on. A voice from below called out that all was well. Granoux closed the window, quite radiant. The truth was that the discharge

of Rougon's gun, and the crash of the broken glass, had awakened the sleepers, who had surrendered, seeing that resistance was impossible, and had discharged their muskets in the air without well knowing what they did.

There are times when guns go off by themselves in the hands of cowards.

Meanwhile Rougon tied Macquart's hands with the curtain bands, while Macquart himself wept with rage.

"Go on," he said. "The others will come back, and then we will settle affairs."

This allusion to the Insurrectionists caused a cold shiver to pass down the backs of the victors, and Macquart watched his brother pale under his glare of hate.

"I know some fine things," continued Macquart. "Send me to the Assizes, that I may tell the judge some funny stories."

Rougon's very lips turned pale. He was in deadly fear that Macquart would speak, and that he should be lowered in the estimation of these gentlemen, who had come to assist him in the salvation of Plassans. These gentlemen drew a little aside, seeing that a stormy explanation between the two brothers was inevitable. Rougon took a heroic resolution. He advanced to the group and said:

"We will keep this man here. When he has reflected a little, he may be able to give us some useful information."

Then in a pompous voice he continued:

"I shall fulfil my duty, gentlemen. I have sworn to save this town from anarchy, and I shall keep my word, were I even compelled in doing so to slay my nearest relative!"

He had the air of an old Roman sacrificing his family on the altar of his country. Granoux, much moved, pressed his hand warmly.

"I understand you," he murmured; "you are sublime."

Granoux then retired, leaving Pierre alone with his brother.

Rougon began:

"You did not expect me, then?" he said. "Unhappy creature! Do you realize to what your vices and your follies have led you?"

Macquart shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here," he answered, "you are an old rascal; he laughs best who laughs last."

Rougon, who could not decide what was best for him to do, pushed his brother into a small dressing-room where the Mayor often took a nap. This dressing-room was lighted from above, and had no other issue than the door into the next room. It was furnished with several chairs, a divan and a marble washstand.

Pierre locked the door after having untied his brother's hands, and stood outside listening.

Macquart dropped heavily on the divan, and then began to sing the Marseillaise in a stentorian voice.

Rougon in his turn placed himself in the Mayor's arm-chair. He sighed and wiped his brow. What a struggle was his to conquer fortune and honors! But the end was near. He felt it in the soft cushions among which he lay. He mechanically touched the mahogany of the desk, and said to himself that it was as smooth as a woman's skin.

He settled himself more at his ease, unconsciously assuming the position in which Macquart had sat while he listened to the reading of his proclamation. This room, with its faded hangings and its smell of musty paper, was to him a Holy temple. But in spite of his delight, he started at each outburst of Macquart's voice. The broken words—"Aristocracy à la lanterne,"—"Down with the rich!" came to him through the door, and disturbed his triumphant dream in a most disagreeable fashion.

Was he always to be thwarted by this man? Was he always to meet him at each turn? His dream which had begun by showing him Plassans at his feet, ended by the vision of a crowded court-room, where Judge and Jury, as well as the audience, eagerly listened to the shameful revelations of Macquart—the story of fifty thousand francs and several others. And while he enjoyed the soft cushions of the Mayor's arm-chair, he saw himself hanging from a lamp-post in La Rue de la Banne. Who would relieve him from this most inconvenient personage? At last Antoine fell asleep, and Pierre had a few minutes of unalloyed bliss.

From these he was aroused by two of his friends, who had just come from the prison to which they had consigned the Insurgents. The day was getting well on—the town would soon be all astir, and it was necessary that they should decide on their course.

Pierre at once proceeded to read the papers which lay on the table.

"This Proclamation suits us perfectly," he exclaimed. "We shall only have a word or two to change."

And in a few moments he read aloud:

"Citizens of Plassans, the hour for resistance is over. The reign of order has returned!"

It was decided that this Proclamation should be printed, and that it should be affixed to all the corners of the streets.

"Now listen," said Rougon; "I am entirely ready to accept the responsibility of my acts. My love of order is shown by what I have done, and I consent to act as Mayor until the regular authorities can be again established. But, lest I should be accused of ambition, I must be assured that I am fulfilling the wishes of my fellow-citizens!"

Granoux and Rondier became quite enthusiastic. Had not their friend rescued the town? and they recapitulated his deeds of prowess. Had not the yellow salon been always open to the friends of power? Had not his ears and eyes been always on the alert? Had not the idea of the dépôt for arms originated with him? and finally on this glorious night were not the gratitude and admiration of the Municipal Council assured?

Then Granoux spoke in praise of the modesty of his friend, whom, he said, no one would ever accuse of ambition, and whose delicacy he could fully comprehend.

Under all this eulogy Rougon bowed his head humbly. He murmured two or three times: "Ah! you are going too far!" with the little gasps of a man who is being tickled. He lay well back among his cushions, and bowed to the right and to the left with the grace of a Prince whom a Coup d'État will suddenly transform into an Emperor.

When they were tired of this incense they descended to stern reality. Granoux started off to find some of the City Council, and Rougon decided to go home. As he entered his own street he trod in a martial way, and his heels resounded on the pavement. He held his hat in his hand, for his face was flushed with gratified pride.

At the foot of the stairs he saw Cassonte, the man he had placed there and bidden to stay. He was still there with his big head on his hands, looking steadily before him with the expression of a faithful dog.

"You are waiting for me?" said Pierre. "Very well; go and say to Monsieur Macquart that I have come home. You will find him at the Mayor's."

Cassonte rose and retired with an awkward bow, to Pierre's great relief, who laughed as he went up the stairs, and said half aloud:

"I certainly have plenty of courage, and plenty of common-sense!"

Félicité had been up all night. He found her in her Sunday costume. Her cap, with garnet ribbons, looked as if she expected company. In vain had she leaned from out her window; she had heard nothing, and was dying of curiosity.

"Well!" she exclaimed, rushing toward her husband, who, whistling lightly, swaggered into the yellow salon. She followed him and closed the doors behind her. She pulled an arm-chair forward, into which he sank, saying as he did so:

"We are all right. I shall have my office."

She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Is that true?" she cried, in a frenzy of delight. "I have heard nothing. Oh! tell me all!"

She behaved as if she were fifteen, and fluttered around him like a moth dazzled by the light. Pierre, in the effusion of his victory, opened his heart to her entirely. He did not omit a detail, and explained even his future projects, forgetting that according to him, women were good for nothing, and that a man, if he wished to retain his mastery, should always keep them in ignorance. Félicité drank in all his words, and even made him repeat a portion of his narration, saying she did not understand; in fact, joy had really affected her head in such a way that there was a strange ringing in her ears. When Pierre told her what had taken place at the Mayor's, she burst into hysterical laughter, and changed her seat several times; she could not sit still. After forty years of ineffectual struggle, they had at last met with success. She was so excited that she forgot all prudence.

"Do you know," she cried, "that you owe all this to me? If I had allowed you to do just as you pleased, you would have been victimized by the Insurgents. You would have been carried off with the Mayor and all the rest."

And showing all her yellow teeth, she added, with a laugh—

"So much for Republics!"

But Pierre had grown very sulky.

"Hold your tongue!" he said. "You always think

you foresee everything. It was I who thought of concealing myself. Women always think they know something about politics. Let me tell you, my old woman, if you had managed this ship, you would have run it on a rock!"

Félicité shut her lips closely together. She had momentarily forgotten the part she intended to play—of a good but silent fairy. She fell into one of those dumb fits of rage which assailed her when her husband looked down on her in a lofty sort of way. She promised herself, when the time came, to take some revenge which would deliver Pierre to her, bound hand and foot.

"The Receiver-General was taken prisoner, you know," added Pierre, quietly.

Félicité started. She was standing at the window, and looking longingly at the Receiver's house. She turned, and in a strange voice said:

"Do you mean that Monsieur Pierotte is arrested?"

She smiled complacently as she spoke; then a bright color suffused her face. She was about to utter the brutal words—

"I wish the Insurgents would murder him!"

Pierre read her thoughts in her eyes.

"If some ball should chance to hit him," he murmured, "it would smooth out everything. He would not be turned out, and we should not be blamed."

But Félicité shivered. It seemed to her that if she assented to these words, it would be like condemning a man to death. If Pierotte were killed, he would haunt

her dreams, and she would feel as if she had killed him. She hardly dared look at the opposite windows, so thoroughly was her joy mingled with terror.

Pierre then proceeded to lay before her all the discomforts and the weak points of their position. He spoke of Macquart. "How on earth was he to get rid of the rascal?"

Félicité cried :

"We can't do everything at once! We will find some way of silencing him."

She moved about the room, dusting and rearranging the furniture. Suddenly she stood still and looked at the faded hangings.

"Good heavens!" she said; "how ugly and shabby it all is! Just think of the people who will be coming here!"

"Pshaw!" replied Pierre, in a tone of superb indifference. "It is easy enough to change all that."

He who the evening before held in holy regard the chairs and the sofa, was now quite ready to jump on them if the fancy had seized him. Félicité, with the same disdain, gave a contemptuous push to an arm-chair that was minus a roller.

Rondier at that moment appeared. It seemed to the old lady that he was much more deferential than usual in his manner toward herself and Pierre. He was followed by others, and soon the salon was full. No one yet knew the details of what had taken place in the night, and all hurried, with their eyes starting out of

their heads and smiles on their faces, to hear the truth. These gentlemen, who had fled the night before so precipitately at the approach of the Insurgents, now came back like a swarm of importunate flies that had been dispersed by a strong wind.

Rougon waited for them to speak, and watched the door with furtive glances. For an hour there was a succession of vague congratulations and admiring murmurs.

At last Granoux appeared. He stood for a moment on the threshold, with his right hand thrust into the breast of his coat, endeavoring to conceal his emotion under an affectation of great dignity. Every one felt at once that something extraordinary was about to take place. Granoux walked up to Rougon and extended his hand.

"My friend," he said, "I am the bearer of the respects of the City Council. They call you to their head until the Mayor returns. You have saved Plassans. Men, with your intelligence and courage, are needed in these abominable days on which we are fallen. Come—"

Granoux hesitated; for the little discourse he had arranged with so much trouble escaped his memory. But Rougon grasped his hands and exclaimed:

"Thanks, my dear Granoux. I am infinitely obliged to you."

Then there were exclamations all around the room, and a mighty hubbub and shaking of hands; but Rougon, dignified as a Judge, asked for a few moments' private conference with Rondier and Granoux. Business before all else: the town was in such a critical position!

The three then retired into a corner and talked with lowered voices. It was quickly decided that Rougon should assume the title of President of the City Council, Granoux should be his Secretary, and Rondier would be Commander-in-chief of the reorganized National Guards. These gentlemen were to support each other under all and every trial.

Félicité came toward them and suddenly said :

“And Vuillet? What of him?”

The men looked at each other. No one had seen Vuillet. Rougon lifted his eyebrows with a little air of anxiety.

“Perhaps he was carried off with the others,” he answered, meditatively.

But Félicité shook her head. Vuillet was not the kind of man to be swallowed up so easily. She was certain that he was concocting some mischief.

The door opened. Vuillet came in with an obsequious bow and thin lips closely compressed. He extended his damp hand to Rougon and then to the others. Vuillet had been, as Félicité thought, cutting his slice out of the cake. He had seen the Insurgents through the grating of his cellar as they marched away, carrying with them the Postmaster.

He immediately walked into that gentleman's private office. He knew all the employés, and told them he would assume the duties of their chief until his return, and they need have no anxiety whatever. He proceeded to examine the morning's mail with concealed curiosity.

He turned over the letters, seeming to look for one in particular. Undoubtedly his new position suited him, for in his contented mood he generously presented one of the employés with a copy of a work that had been repressed by the Censors.

Vuillet had a choice collection of obscene literature, which he concealed in a deep drawer under a layer of rosaries and religious engravings. It was he who inundated the town with photographs which should have been burned in the Market Place. His sale of prayer-books, however, was in no degree injured by this more lucrative business.

After some consideration, he felt that he might have been rather hasty in the manner in which he had taken possession of the Post-Office, and went to call on Rougon, who was growing into a most puissant individual.

"What on earth have you been about?" asked Félicité, suspiciously.

Then he told his story with many embellishments. According to him, he had prevented the Post-Office from being pillaged.

"Stay there!" said Pierre, authoritatively, "and make yourself useful."

This last phrase revealed the real fear of the Rougons. They dreaded lest any should be useful but themselves. Pierre, however, felt that there could be no serious peril to fear while Vuillet was shut up in the Post-Office Department. But Félicité was not altogether pleased.

Rougon then proceeded to give his attentive audience

an account of the occurrences of the night. He was quite magnificent in his dramatic rendering of the events. The distribution of the fire-arms was quite thrilling, but the description of the march through the deserted streets and the seizure of the Mayoralty, struck these worthy Bourgeois with stupor.

"And you were only forty-one in number?" one said.

"Upon my word, you were very courageous," murmured another.

These questions excited Rougon's imagination to greater activity. He answered every one; rehearsed the whole scene, and took all parts. He repeated the exclamations of the Insurgents when they were surprised. In short, he was magnificent.

Granoux burned to tell something himself—Rondier was by no means willing to be kept entirely in the background, and both interrupted Rougon occasionally—sometimes they all spoke at once, and disputed with some little sharpness over the order of events.

Finally Rougon's narration drew near its close.

"Fortunately no blood was spilled!" he said.

"But was there no firing?" asked Félicité, fearing this would be regarded as a lame and impotent conclusion.

"Oh, yes! there were guns discharged with culpable imprudence."

And in reply to a murmur, he continued:

"Culpable is precisely what I mean. War is cruel enough at the best, without the useless shedding of blood. One of these balls wounded the cheek of one of the Insurgents."

This unexpected wound satisfied his hearers, and Rougon went on to describe the arrest of his brother, but without naming him, simply calling him "the Chief of the Band."

"He leaped upon me," he said. "I pushed aside the Mayor's arm-chair, and seized him by the throat. My gun was in the way, but I did not care to lay it down. In the scuffle it went off."

"No," exclaimed Granoux, who had been mad to speak; "I saw it all. The man wished to murder you. I saw his black fingers slip through your arm. It was he who drew the trigger."

"Is that so?" said Rougon, turning very pale.

He had not been aware of his danger at the time, and was now chilled with fear. Granoux was not in the habit of lying, but on the day of a great battle a man may be excused for seeing things dramatically.

"I heard the ball whistle past my ear," said Rougon, in a low, hoarse whisper.

There was a long silence. Every one was full of respect for this great hero, who had heard a ball whistle past his ear. Who else among them had had a similar experience?

Félicité believed it to be her duty to throw herself into her husband's arms. But Rougon gently put her aside, and ended his tale by a sentence which is still remembered in Plassans:

"I heard the ball whistle past my ear, and it shivered the great mirror over the mantel."

The excitement was great. The mirror became an

individual, and it was spoken of as if it had been shot through the heart.

Finally Rougon and his two deputies announced that they must go to the Mayor's office. Granoux was bursting with importance, and as he left the room, he took Rougon's arm with the air of a great captain exhausted by fatigue, murmuring:

"I have been on my feet for thirty-six hours, and Heaven only knows when I shall be allowed to get to bed!"

Before Rougon went away he took Vuillet aside, and told him he must at once publish an article, treating as they deserved the rascally band, which had been seen in Plassans.

The habitués of the yellow salon were not now disposed to linger there long. They were eager to publish to the world all the news they had gathered, and quickly dispersed: Félicité from her window saw them hurrying down the street.

It was now between ten and eleven. Plassans at last was wide awake, and in a great state of excitement. Rumors were in circulation that thousands of bandits had invaded the streets, and disappeared at dawn like an army of phantoms. Some skeptics shrugged their shoulders. But as certain details were very precise, Plassans began to believe that a terrible misfortune had hung over them, but had not touched them. This vague horror and mystery made even the bravest shudder. Who had turned away the lightning? They spoke of unknown

preservers—of a little band of men, who had boldly severed the head of this Hydra, but no one knew who these noble creatures were, until the habitués of the yellow salon appeared in the street and disseminated the news. It went like a train of powder, and ran from one end of the town to the other in the shortest conceivable time. Rougon's name was in every mouth, accompanied with exclamations of surprise in the Ville Neuve, and with eulogy in the old Quartier.

The idea that they were without a Sub-Prefect—without a Mayor—without a Postmaster, without, in fact, authorities of any kind, horrified the citizens. They could not understand how they could have slept through events of such importance and then awakened as usual. The first stupor over, they looked eagerly for their liberators.

Some of the Republicans shrugged their shoulders, but the small shopkeepers, all the Conservatives in short, blessed these heroes, whose exploits had been shrouded in darkness.

When it was known that Rougon had arrested his own brother, their admiration knew no bounds. Allusions were made to Brutus, and this indiscretion which he feared would do him harm, added to his glory. The gratitude was unanimous, and Rougon was accepted as their preserver.

“Just think of it!” said those who were cowards.
“They were only forty-one of them.”

The story ran through Plassans that forty-one of the citizens had compelled three thousand rebels to eat the

dust. Some of the dwellers in La Ville Neuve—lawyers without cases, and old military men who were ashamed of their slumbers on that eventful night—ventured to raise a doubt. Why were there no proofs of this hand-to-hand combat? No dead bodies—no stains of blood? It was certainly very strange.

“But the mirror!” repeated the fanatics. “Surely you can’t deny that the Mayor’s mirror was broken! You can go and look at it for yourself!”

And all day long, until nightfall, there was a procession of individuals going in and out of the Mayor’s room, looking at the round hole in the mirror, with its radiating fractures. Then one after the other said precisely the same words: “Bless my soul! That ball had some strength!” And they went away quite convinced.

Félicité, at her window, drank in with delight all this hum of praise rising from the town, which at this hour was exclusively occupied with her husband. The hour of her triumph was near at hand, and she looked forward to grinding the town under her heel. All the past bitterness of her life came back to her and sharpened her present enjoyment.

She left her window and walked slowly up and down the room, which seemed to her absolutely sanctified. Was it not here that her husband had been flattered and eulogized? Was it not here that the Bourgeois had humbled themselves? The shabby furniture, the worn velvet and tarnished gilding, all assumed in her eyes the aspect of the glorious relics found on a field of battle. The

plain of Austerlitz never awakened a more profound emotion.

She went to the window once more, and seeing Aristide on the Square, she beckoned to him ; but he did not choose to answer her appeal.

She called him.

"Come up!" she said. "Your father is not here."

Aristide came in with the air of a Prodigal son. For four years he had not entered this room. His arm was still in a sling.

"Your hand still pains you, then?" asked his mother, half laughing.

He colored, and with some embarrassment, replied :

"Oh! it is better ; it is nearly well!"

Then he turned away, not knowing what to say.

Félicité took compassion on him.

"You have heard of your father's beautiful conduct?" she said.

He answered that the whole town was talking of it, and then his usual confidence returned. He looked his mother full in the face, and returned the smile with which she had inquired about his arm.

"I came to see if my father was wounded."

"Nonsense!" answered Félicité, petulantly. "Why don't you act as if you had common-sense? Come forward boldly. Acknowledge that you made a mistake in joining the Republicans. You will not be sorry if you enrol yourself on our side."

But Aristide protested. "Republicanism was a great idea," he said.

"I understand you," answered his mother, warmly. "You are afraid your father will receive you badly; but I will arrange all that. Take my advice; write an article which will appear to-morrow in praise of the Coup d'État, and then come here in the evening, and you will be received with open arms."

And as the young man was still silent, she continued, in an earnest tone:

"Do you not understand. Our good fortune is also yours. Do not be silly. You are seriously compromised unless you join us at once."

The young man made a gesture—the gesture of Cæsar passing the Rubicon. He made no verbal engagement; but as he was about to leave, his mother caught the end of the scarf which bound his arm.

"First, let me take off this thing! It is ridiculous, you know!"

Aristide allowed her to remove the silk scarf. He took it from her, folded it smoothly, and placed it in his pocket. He then kissed his mother, and said he would see her the next day.

Rougon had, in the meantime, taken formal possession of the Mayoralty. There were but eight of the Council left—the others were in the hands of the Insurgents. These eight gentlemen were thrown into an agony of terror when the critical position of the town was laid clearly before them. The municipal machine belonged to any one who understood its workings. Rougon was by force of circumstances the absolute master of the town—a most extraordinary crisis which could place this power in the

hands of a man of tarnished reputation, to whom twenty-four hours before, not a person in the town would have lent one hundred francs.

Pierre's first act was to announce the permanence of the Provisionary Commission. Then he busied himself with the reorganization of the National Guards. He got together about three hundred of the old men, distributed the arms which he had stored, and over five hundred soldiers were placed under the command of Rondier, who, when he reviewed his little army in the Square, was made utterly miserable by seeing that the vegetable merchants were secretly laughing. His men were without uniforms, and their black hats, coats and guns were singularly unharmonious. But their intentions were good. A detachment was left at the door of the Mayoralty, and the rest were distributed at the different doors of the city.

Rougon went to La Rue Canquoin to ask the gendarmes to remain on the side of Law and Order. He directed the doors to be broken open, for the Insurgents had carried away the keys. He told them that he should call on them, if he required their services; but in the meantime all he asked of them was inaction. The Brigadier complimented him on his prudence. Rougon, hearing that there was a wounded man there, asked to see him, as he thought this would tend to his popularity. He found Rengade lying down, with his eye bandaged. He talked to him of Duty and of many other similarly comforting things—the blind man cursing and swearing all the time: for he knew that

this wound would compel him to leave the service. Pierre promised to send a physician to him.

"Thank you, sir," answered Rengade; "but what would do me more good than anything else, would be to wring the neck of the little rascal that put out my eye. I should know him instantly. He was a pale fellow—very young."

Pierre remembered the blood he had seen on Silvère's hands. He retreated a little as if he feared that the sufferer would spring at his throat, and shout out:

"It was your nephew who blinded me! You shall pay for it."

And while Pierre silently cursed every member of his family connection, he declared solemnly that if the fellow could be found he should be punished with the extreme rigor of the law.

"No, no; you need not take the trouble, for I intend to wring his neck for him," answered the blind man.

The Proclamation which appeared early in the day produced an excellent impression; and the streets until twilight offered an appearance of general relief and restored confidence.

A report, coming from no one knew whence, was in circulation, to the effect that the troops sent in pursuit of the Insurgents were approaching. People straggled out on the high road, with the hope of hearing the music, but returned greatly disappointed, having seen and heard nothing.

Uneasiness began to be felt once more, and the

members of the Provisionary Commission were particularly disturbed. Rougon, attributing this to the fact of their having had no dinner, sent them off, bidding them come back at nine o'clock. He was himself about to leave when Macquart awoke, and began to pound violently on the door of his prison.

He declared he was hungry, and asked what time it was; and when his brother said it was five o'clock, he grumblingly replied that his friends ought to have been back before that hour, and they would soon appear. Rougon sent him something to eat, and then departed, considerably disturbed by Macquart's persistence in speaking of the return of the Insurgents.

In the streets his uneasiness increased. The aspect of the town seemed to him changed. Silent shadows flitted along the sidewalks, and over the mournful houses seemed to fall, with the twilight, a gray fear as persistent as a fine rain. The foolish confidence felt during the day added to this equally foolish and unreasoning terror of the night. The inhabitants were weary to that degree, that they had hardly strength to wonder, what reprisals the Insurgents would take. Rougon shivered with terror as he hurried on. As he passed the Café on the corner where the lamps were just lighted, he heard a word or two that frightened him still more.

"You know," said a coarse voice, "that it is thought the soldiers have been massacred by the rebels!"

There was a horrified exclamation from many voices. Rougon was tempted to go in, and laugh at their credulity;

but as he was by no means easy in his own mind he did not venture to do this. When he met his wife at his own door, she reproached him for his down-heartedness, but when the dessert was on the table she comforted him again.

"Don't you see," she said, "that it is a great gain to us if the Prefect does forget us? We shall have saved the town all the same. I should like the rebels to come back; we could receive them as they deserve, and cover ourselves with glory. Listen to my advice: go yourself, and close the gates of the town; then do not go to sleep all night, but move about a good deal, and keep yourself before the public as much as possible: it will all count in your favor later."

Pierre returned to his colleagues considerably cheered. The members of the Council came in one after the other, bringing panic in their garments as we carry about the smell of rain on a stormy day. They declared they were to be abandoned to the fury of a mob, and Pierre promised that he would send for a regiment of soldiers the next day. Then he told them he was about to have the gates closed. The National Guards repaired to the gates, shut and locked them, and when they returned, the Council seemed much relieved. Pierre told them that the critical condition of the town made it necessary for him to remain at his post all night, and asked if they would do the same. They rendered a cordial assent, and about eleven o'clock all these gentlemen were soundly sleeping in the Mayor's arm-chairs and on his sofas.

A tall lamp on the desk lighted the strange scene. Rougon suddenly started up and sent for Vuillet, whose promised article he remembered not having seen.

The Librarian soon appeared, and in not the best possible humor.

"Well!" said Rougon, "where is your article?"

"Did you send for me on that account?" asked Vuillet, angrily. "The paper itself was not issued. I really did not care to be massacred to-morrow, if the rebels should chance to return!"

Rougon forced a smile, saying that he did not think there was much danger of this event taking place. It was precisely to quell just such foolish rumors that the article was required, and would have done excellent service in a good cause.

"I dare say," returned Vuillet; "but the best cause, it strikes me now, is to keep one's head on one's shoulders. No," he added with a sneer; "I thought you had killed all the Insurgents, but I find you have left too many for me to run any risk."

Rougon, as the man left the room, sat aghast at the impertinence of this man, who was ordinarily so humble. He could not comprehend it, but he had no time to seek for an explanation, for Rondier entered, making a great noise with the sabre that was fastened at his side.

All the sleepers started up, thinking it was a call to arms.

"Gentlemen," said Rondier, "I think the Insurgents are upon us!"

These words were received in dismal silence. Rougon alone had strength to say:

"Have you seen them?"

"No; but we hear very strange noises in the environs of the town, and one of my men affirms that he saw mysterious fires kindled along the mountain side."

And as the gentlemen looked at each other with scared faces, he added:

"I am going back to my post. I am in fear of some attack. I have done my duty and warned you."

Rougon tried to detain him, but his efforts were useless. The Council tore their hair. Strange noises! Mysterious fires! What a frightful night this was! What should they do! Granoux advised the same tactics which had served them so well the night before, that is, to hide themselves and wait until the rebels had left Plassans, and then emerge from their concealment and take possession of the deserted streets. Pierre, remembering what his wife had said, told them that Rondier could easily be mistaken, and that the best way was to see for themselves.

The Council made a wry face at this, but when it was agreed that an armed escort should accompany them, their courage revived. With thirty of the National Guards they ventured into the sleeping town. They went along the ramparts from gate to gate, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. The National Guards at the different posts asserted that they had heard no strange sounds from outside, and when Granoux listened himself he could distinguish nothing save the clamor of the Viorne.

Yet their anxiety was not altogether calmed, and they returned with preoccupied minds, although they pretended to shrug their shoulders and spoke of Rondier as a visionary. Suddenly Rougon, who wished to reassure his friends, determined to show them the plain. He led his little troop to the Quartier Saint-Marc, and knocked at the Hôtel Valqueyras.

The Count had left Plassans for his château, and there was no one in the hotel except the Marquis de Carnavant, who, since the previous evening, had remained quietly within doors, not out of fear, but because he was unwilling to be seen, at this decisive moment, too much with the Rougon faction.

He was extremely curious to know what was going on in the yellow salon, and when a valet came to tell him, in the middle of the night, that there were some gentlemen below, who wished to see him, he could be prudent no longer, but hurried down.

"My dear Marquis," said Rougon, presenting the members of the Municipal Commission, "we have a great favor to ask of you. Will you allow us to go into the garden?"

"Certainly," answered the astonished gentleman. "I will go with you myself."

And as they went the Marquis heard the reason of this extraordinary request. The garden terminated in a terrace, which overlooked the plain, and from this spot a limitless stretch of land was outspread before them.

Rougon saw at once that no better post for observation

could be obtained. The National Guards remained in the background, and the members of the Commission leaned over the parapet of the terrace. The strange sight before them silenced them completely. Afar off, in the valley, ran the river, between the Garrigues and La Seille, the moonlight falling on the water. Groups of trees and sombre rocks, on tongues of land, stretched out into this sea of light.

Granoux, though by no means of a poetical temperament, was so moved by the serene peace of this wintry scene that he said:

“A most beautiful night, gentlemen.”

“Rondier has certainly been dreaming!” said Rougon, with some disdain.

But the Marquis had acute ears.

“Hark!” he whispered, “I hear the tocsin.”

They all leaned over the parapet and held their breath, and lightly, with a crystal-like sound, the far-off tinkle of a bell was heard.

It was certainly the tocsin. Rougon declared it to be the bell at Béage, a village a full league from Plassans. He said this to reassure his colleagues.

“Listen! Listen!” interrupted the Marquis. “This time it is certainly the bell of Saint-Maur we hear!”

This second bell was instantly followed by another, and another, until twenty were ringing as rapidly as possible—the whole plain joined in the desperate appeal. The Marquis, who rather enjoyed terrifying Rougon, was quite willing to explain the cause of all this commotion.

"It means," he said, "that the neighboring villages are mustering, and intend to attack Plassans at daybreak."

Granoux half closed his eyes.

"Do you see nothing down there?" he asked.

No one heard him or paid any attention to what he said, but shut their eyes to hear better.

"Look!" he resumed, after a momentary silence. "Do you see nothing close to the shore?"

"Yes—I see," replied Rougon, desperately; "it is a fire—"

Another fire was lighted almost immediately opposite the other; then a third and a fourth. Red spots appeared all along the valley, at almost equal distances, like the lamps in a gigantic avenue. The moon, now sinking rapidly, made these lights look like pools of blood. This sinister illumination completed the consternation of the Council.

"Upon my life!" sneered the Marquis, "the brigands have a very pretty system of signals!"

And he counted the fires, in order to ascertain, he said, how many men were to fight with the brave fellows of Plassans. Rougon was disposed to suggest doubts, and to say that the villages were simply signalling their intention of joining the Insurgents, and had no intention of attacking Plassans. But his hearers, by their silence, showed that their minds were made up, and that they refused all consolation.

"I hear the Marseillaise," said Granoux, in a despairing tone.

He was correct. A band had followed the Viorne, and, as they approached the town, broke out with the words:

“To arms, citizens—form your ranks!”

It was really a most extraordinary night! These gentlemen spent it with their elbows on the parapet, stiff with cold, but unable to tear themselves from this spectacle of this vast plain, shaken by the Marseillaise and the tocsin, and all aflame with signal fires.

Before their eyes blazed this luminous sea, and in their ears resounded this wild clamor. They were finally unable to separate what they really saw and heard from the work of their imagination.

On no account would they have left this place; had they turned their backs, they would have fancied that the enemy were in hot pursuit. Toward morning, however, when the moon had set, they were seized by a horrible panic, fancying that invisible shadows were hiding among the trees, ready to leap at their throats. The slightest noise they heard, they construed into men whispering and consulting at the foot of the terrace before scaling it.

The Marquis, as if to console them, said, in his ironical voice:

“Do not be disturbed—they will wait until daybreak!”

Rougon stormed and cursed. He felt horribly afraid. Granoux's hair turned white. At last day came slowly on. It was a horrible moment of suspense to these gentlemen, for they fully expected to see an army ranged in a line-of-battle before the town.

With extended neck and eager eyes they peered through

the slowly dissipating mists of the night. And in the vague shadows they saw monstrous sights: the plain transformed into a lake of blood—the rocks were dead bodies floating on its surface—the trees were battalions of armed men! At last, when the dawn had effaced these phantoms, the day was so cold, so pale and sad, that even the Marquis was depressed. There were no Insurgents to be seen—the highway was clear; but the gray valley had a cut-throat aspect. The fires were extinguished, but the bells still sounded. About eight o'clock Rougon caught sight of a band of men creeping along the shores of the river.

Our friends were nearly dead with cold, hunger, and fatigue. Not seeing any immediate peril, they decided to take a few hours of repose. A sentinel was left on the terrace with orders to warn Rondier if he saw anything unusual. Granoux and Rougon, prostrated by the emotions of the night, hurried to their homes. They lived near each other.

Félicité received her husband with the greatest tenderness. She called him "poor dear," and prophesied that all would end well; but he shook his head. She allowed him to sleep until eleven o'clock; then, after giving him a good breakfast, hurried him away.

At the Mayor's room Rougon met only four of the Council. The others sent excuses: they were really ill. Terror had taken violent possession of the whole town, for the gentlemen who had spent the night on the terrace of the Hôtel Valqueyras did not keep their experience

a secret, but told it to all their acquaintances with the addition of many a dramatic incident. In fact many persons in Plassans believed that these gentlemen had witnessed cannibals dancing and devouring their prisoners; sorcerers stirring the caldrons, wherein simmered the dissevered bodies of children, and an interminable file of bandits, whose arms glittered in the mingled light of fire and moon. They talked, too, of the bells, which sounded the alarm, as rang by hands that were not of this world, and declared that the Insurgents had set fire to the forests in the environs, and that all the country was aflame.

It was Tuesday, market day at Plassans. Rondier wanted the gates thrown open to admit the peasants with their vegetables, butter, and eggs. As soon as the Council assembled, five in number, including the President, it was decided that this would be most culpable imprudence, and that the gates must be kept closed. Then Rougon decided that the public crier must go through the streets, and proclaim the town to be in a state of siege, and then no one could pass through the gates, either to go out or to pass in. The gates were officially closed at mid-day, therefore. This step, taken to reassure the public mind, only drove people wild with terror; and nothing could be more curious than to see this town, in the nineteenth century, in mid-day, thus bolted and barred.

When Plassans had buckled tight its belt of ramparts, which was bolted like a besieged fortress under fire, there was nothing more for the inhabitants to do but to

wait the progress of events. They were in momentary expectation of hearing the firing break forth. Nothing was known of what was going on in the outside world. For two days the Insurgents had interrupted all communication between Plassans and the rest of France. Around them rang the tocsin and the Marseillaise, with its sound of a torrent let free, and the town were mad with mingled fear and hope.

About two o'clock the report was circulated that the Coup d'État had been a disastrous failure; that the Prince President was a prisoner in Vincennes; that Paris was in the hands of the demagogues, and that Marseilles, Toulon, and all the South, in fact, were in the power of the victorious Insurrectionists, who would march on Plassans that night, and murder the inhabitants.

A deputation waited on the Municipal Council to reproach them for having closed the gates, which would naturally add to the irritation of the Insurgents. Rougon lost his head, and defended his orders. They asked him where the soldiers were that he had promised. He then told a square lie, and declared he had promised none. The absence of this much-talked-of regiment was, in reality, the principal cause of the panic. The best informed people undertook to name the very spot where these unfortunate soldiers had been massacred.

At four o'clock the Council, with Rougon at their head, were again on the terrace at Orchères. The cold was insufferable. There was nothing to be seen, and they agreed that it was useless to linger there. Rondier, of

course, must keep watch and guard. Poor Rondier, who had been a member of the National Guard under Louis Philippe, accepted his position meekly.

Pierre went home through the most unfrequented streets. He felt that his popularity was on the wane. He heard his name at every corner, and with it some contemptuous epithet or sneer. His wife received him in silent consternation, for she, too, had begun to despair. Could it be that their dream was to vanish thus? And they sat and looked at each other in the yellow salon. The day was fading—a dark, wintry day, which gave a dingy look to the orange paper, with its huge branches. Never had the room looked so dingy and sordid. They were alone. Not a soul was left of the crowd who congratulated them the evening before. One day had seen them conquered and browbeaten, and if the following twenty-four hours were not more propitious, their game was lost. Félicité, who the night before had dreamed of Austerlitz, thought now of Waterloo.

Then, as her husband said nothing, she went to the window—to the window where she had gazed with such longing upon the house opposite. She saw a number of persons on the Square and closed the blinds, fearing she would be hissed, or the glasses broken by missiles. She felt that these people were looking up at her windows, and talking of herself and her husband.

One voice was high above the others.

“I told you that the Insurgents would not ask permission of the forty-one to return. The forty-one! What a preposterous farce it all was!”

"There was no fighting whatever," answered his companion. "I went myself to see, and the court-yard, at the Mayor's, was as clean as my hand!"

A workman, who had timidly joined the group, added:

"It did not require much to take possession of the Mayoralty. The doors were not even shut."

A laugh greeted this sentence, which so encouraged the workman that he added:

"This Rougon does not amount to much anyway."

This insult cut Félicité to the heart. The ingratitude overwhelmed her. She called her husband, that he, too, might read this lesson of the instability of the masses.

"The mirror that was broken is about all that took place," continued the first speaker, "of any consequence, and I believe that Rougon fired at it deliberately to make believe there had been some fray."

Pierre uttered a low cry of pain. By-and-by, some one would say that he had never heard a ball whistle past his ear, and there would not be a vestige of his glory left. But this was not all. A hoary-headed scandal-monger now narrated, with many hesitations for lack of memory, the tale of Adelaide's affair with the smuggler. His story aroused new indignation, and the words, "thieves—rabble—shameless wretches!" rose to the casement, behind which Rougon and Félicité listened with fear and anger. Then some one uttered a few words of compassion for Macquart. Yesterday Rougon had been looked upon as a modern Brutus, who sacrificed his family affections on the altar of his country. But to-day Rougon was only an

adventurer, who had trampled down his brother, and used him as a footstool to raise himself.

"You hear!" murmured Pierre. "You hear what these people say? We are lost!"

Félicité drummed on the blind with stiffened fingers, and answered:

"Let them say what they will. If we end by being the strongest, they will see with what wood I can warm myself. I know whence comes this blow. It is from the Ville Neuve."

And Madame Rougon was right. The sudden unpopularity of her husband was due to a few lawyers who were much vexed at the importance which had been thrust upon, or assumed by, this illiterate and almost bankrupt merchant.

They declared that Rondier and Granoux were excellent men, who were deceived by that rascal, Rougon. But for him Granoux would have been Mayor *pro tem*. Nothing that Rougon had done was wise, or had even a grain of sense in it. His closing the gates was an absolute act of folly, and it was his fault that five members of the Council had been taken with inflammation of the lungs in consequence of their exposure on the terrace of the Hôtel Valqueyras.

The Republicans were considerably encouraged by this obvious discontent, and they began to discuss the possibility of taking some active steps.

Rougon had a happy thought.

"Was not Aristide," he asked, "coming to-night to make peace?"

"Yes," answered Félicité, "he promised a splendid article, but the paper did not appear."

Her husband interrupted her quickly.

"Is not that he, just going out of the Sub-Prefect's?"

"Certainly it is," cried his wife, glancing out, "and he has put the scarf on his arm again."

Yes, it was true, Aristide had resumed his sling. The Empire was not established, nor were the Republicans in power; therefore he deemed it expedient to resume his rôle of a wounded man. He crossed the Square without looking up, and disappeared around the corner.

"No, he is not coming up," said Félicité, bitterly. "We are low down now, and our children desert us."

She closed the window that she might hear no more, and when she had lighted the lamp they dined; but their food was left on their plates; in their discouragement they forgot to eat. They had little time to decide on the course they should adopt. Unless Plassans was at their feet by the next morning, they must make up their minds to see Fortune slip from beyond their grasp.

The absolute lack of certain intelligence was the only cause of this trouble. This Félicité, with her quick intuition, instantly perceived. If they knew the result of the Coup d'État, they could play their rôle with undiminished audacity, either keeping up their parts as saviours of the town, or compel people to forget that they had made such preposterous claims. But as they knew nothing precisely, they lost their head at the idea of staking everything on that throw of the dice while in this lamentable state of dense ignorance.

"And that devil of a Eugène has not written me!" cried Rougon, despairingly, without remembering that this

exclamation revealed to his wife what he supposed to be a secret from her.

But Félicité pretended not to have heard. But she asked herself with a sudden sinking of her heart why it was that they had not heard from Eugène. He had kept them faithfully informed of the success of the Bonapartist cause, and should also have hastened to announce the triumph or defeat of Prince Louis. Simple prudence would have counselled this. If, therefore, he was silent, it must be because a Republican victory had consigned him to the prison at Vincennes. Félicité shivered. Her son's unbroken silence destroyed her last hope.

At this moment the *Gazette* was brought in, fresh and damp.

"Is it possible," exclaimed Pierre, "that Vuillet has issued his paper after all!"

He hastily opened it, read the heading of an article, and sank back in his chair.

"Read!" he said, faintly; and held the paper to Félicité.

It was a superb article—extremely severe toward the Insurgents. Never before had so much venom and so many falsehoods fallen from one pen! Vuillet began by describing their entrance into Plassans—"These bandits, this scum of the earth, invaded the town," he wrote, "drunk with brandy, luxury and pillage." Then he went on to say that they terrified the populace by their savage cries and threats of assassination.

The scene at the Hôtel de Ville and the arrest of the authorities was an atrocious deed: they took the most

respectable men by the throat, the Mayor, the Commander of the National Guards, the Postmaster—in fact, all the functionaries—spat in their faces, and crowned them with thorns, so to speak.

Vuillet spoke of twenty girls in scarlet raiment. Poor little Miette had been thus multiplied.

“And among these monsters,” he wrote, “were shameless creatures clad in red, as if they had been rolled in the blood of the martyrs whom these assassins had murdered and left to die on the road-side. They waved their flags, and abandoned themselves openly to the ignoble caresses of the entire horde!”

This was the beginning of the article, which wound up with a virulent peroration; Vuillet asking if France would submit any longer to “these wild beasts, who respected neither property nor people.” He made an appeal to all brave citizens, saying that longer toleration would be absolute encouragement, and that the Insurgents would “tear the daughter from the mother, the wife from the arms of her husband.” Finally, after a well-worded sentence in which he declared that God wished these miscreants to be exterminated, he ended by these words:

“We hear that these scoundrels are again at our doors; so be it! Let each of us take a gun and kill them, as we would dogs. I shall be found in the first rank, glad that I have it in my power to assist in exterminating such vermin from the earth!”

This article—a combination of Provincial heaviness and ordinary abuse—utterly appalled Rougon.

"This is the last drop in our cup," he murmured; "they will all believe that I inspired this diatribe."

"But," said his wife, thoughtfully, "did you not tell me this morning that he absolutely refused to attack Republicanism? You said he was frightened and pale as death."

"Yes, to be sure—I do not understand in the least."

Neither did Félicité; the thought of this man, musket in hand, patrolling the ramparts, seemed to her one of the most extraordinary things she had ever heard of. There was certainly something underneath which they had not got at. She felt certain that if the rebels were at the gates of the city, Vuillet would never have uttered these threats.

"He is a bad man. I have always said so," resumed Rougon, as he laid down the paper. "I was altogether too good-natured in allowing him to stay in the Post-Office."

These words were a flash of inspiration to Félicité, who started to her feet. She threw on a hat and shawl.

"What now?" asked her husband. "It is after nine o'clock. Are you going out?"

"You can go to bed," she replied. "You are tired, of course; I am not. You can rest. Sleep while you can—I will wake you when I come back, and we will talk then."

She went out with an alert step, and hurried to the Post-Office. She entered Vuillet's private room. He started when he saw her. Never had Vuillet been so

happy as in his present position. Every letter underwent his personal examination; he turned them all over and over, smelt of them, rapped them lightly with his knuckles. His temptation was as great as his pleasure, for the secrets of all Plassans were there—secrets which involved the honor of women, the fortunes of men—and he had but to break the seals in order to become the confidant of the best people in town. Besides, the Librarian could sin with impunity just at the time of which we write, for if some letters were delayed, and if others were lost entirely, the blame would be laid at the door of the Republicans, who had disturbed all communication. The shutting of the gates disturbed his calculations in some degree, but it was finally settled that the mail was to be allowed to come in.

He had unsealed several letters—those which his instinct told him contained intelligence likely to be of use to him. These he kept in a drawer, intending to distribute them later—after he had acquired a reputation for courage, when all the rest of the town shook in their shoes.

Our readers will admit that this astute being had fully understood the situation. When Madame Rougon entered, he was turning over an immense mass of letters and papers, apparently sorting them. He rose with his usual obsequious smile, and drew forward a chair; his red eyelids quivered uneasily. But Félicité did not sit down; she said, quietly, but sternly:

“I want the letter.”

Vuillet half shut his eyes with an innocent sort of look.

"What letter, dear lady?" he asked.

"The letter you received this morning for my husband. Please be quick, sir, as I am really in great haste."

As he stammered and equivocated, saying that he had seen no letter, and that it was certainly very odd, Félicité interrupted him with a certain menace in her voice:

"The letter in question is from Paris—from my son, Eugène. You know now, I fancy; but I will find it myself."

She extended her hand, as if to turn over several packages of letters, which lay on the desk. He hastily interfered, and said he would look. The service was so very imperfect just then. Perhaps there might be a letter for her, after all, and if there were, of course it would be found. But he had not seen it, that was quite certain.

As he spoke he walked hastily about the room, and seemed to be looking among all the papers. Then he opened drawers and boxes, Félicité waiting calmly all this time.

"You are right," he at last exclaimed, taking some papers from a box. "Ah! these clerks, they take advantage of the present crisis to do nothing as it ought to be done!"

Félicité took the letter and examined the seal, not appearing to be in the least disturbed that her evident mistrust must wound her companion. She saw at once that the envelope had been opened, for the Librarian had fastened it with a wax that was somewhat deeper in color

than the original seal. She opened the envelope in such a way that the seal was uninjured, as she felt that some time she might want to use this testimony.

Eugène announced, in a few brief words, the complete success of the Coup d'État. He announced their complete victory. Paris was conquered. The Provinces would not dare lift a finger, and he advised his parents to stand firm in the partial insurrection which now disturbed the South. He told them that their fortunes were made, if they did not now flinch.

Madame Rougon put her letter in her pocket, and then seated herself, looking Vuillet full in his face. He pretended to be very busy, and would not look at her.

"Listen to me, Monsieur Vuillet," she said. "Let us lay our cards on the table! You are making a great mistake, which will do you harm. If, instead of opening my letters—"

He straightened himself up, pretending to be much offended; but she calmly continued:

"I know you well; you will never acknowledge it. But it is useless to waste words in this way. I think you would do better to be frank—"

And as he continued to talk about his honesty, she at last lost all patience.

"Do you think me a fool?" she cried. "Have I not read your article?"

She at last induced him to admit that the thing of all others he preferred was to have the college custom. It had been his once; but when the Faculty discovered

that he sold obscene engravings to the pupils, he was dismissed, and came near being sent to the House of Correction.

Félicité seemed much astonished at the modesty of his ambition. To violate the seals of letters, to risk the galleys—merely to sell a few dictionaries!

“Oh!” he said, in a sharp voice, “five thousand francs per annum is not such a trifle in my eyes. I do not ask, like some people, for impossibilities.”

She did not reply, and there was no more said about breaking open letters. A treaty of alliance was concluded, by which Vuillet promised to do all that they desired of him, provided the Rougons would assure him the custom of the college. When she left him, Félicité enjoined caution upon him, and told him that all the letters must be distributed the next day.

She returned home with slow, thoughtful steps, and even took a longer way that she might have more time for reflection. Under the trees she met the Marquis de Carnavant, who had taken advantage of the night and its darkness to roam the town without compromising himself. The clergy of Plassans, to whom all action was abhorrent, had, since the Coup d'État, preserved the most absolute neutrality. The Empire, in their eyes, was a settled thing, and they only waited their time to resume, in a new direction, their secular intrigues. The Marquis, no longer useful as their agent, was devoured with curiosity to see how the Rougons would come out.

“Is that you, child?” he said, as he met Félicité. “I

wanted much to see you. Your affairs are becoming considerably disturbed, are they not?"

"Not at all; they are all I could desire," she answered.

"I am glad to hear it; but you must tell me more than that. I must acknowledge that I was mortally afraid for your husband and his colleagues the other night. If you had only seen how ridiculous they were when I pretended to discover Insurgents behind every tree in the valley. Will you forgive me?"

"I thank you!" answered Félicité. "I wish you would do it again. Come in some morning when I am entirely alone."

She turned away abruptly, as if her meeting the Marquis had decided some doubtful question in her mind. Her steps were quick and decided; indomitable will was expressed in all her little person. She saw the way now to avenge herself on Pierre for his secretiveness, and to hold her pre-eminence in their home.

She found Pierre asleep. She took the candle, and, holding it in one hand, looked at him attentively. Then she drew a chair to the side of the bed, tore off her hat, loosened her hair, and began to sob.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked Pierre, suddenly awakened.

She did not answer; but wept more bitterly than before.

"For heaven's sake, answer!" replied her husband, terrified by this despair. "Where have you been? Have you seen the Insurgents?"

She shook her head and said, faintly:

"I come from the Hôtel Valqueyras. I went to ask advice from Monsieur de Carnavant. Ah! my poor friend, all is lost!"

Pierre sat up in bed. He was very pale; his large neck was displayed by his night-shirt, which was open at the throat. He looked like a Chinese idol.

"The Marquis," continued Félicité, "thinks that the Prince has succumbed. We are ruined, and have not a cent in the world!"

As is often the case with cowards, Pierre flew into a passion. It was all his wife's fault—the fault of the Marquis—the fault of his family! He himself never cared for politics, and should never have had anything to do with them but for their bad counsel!

"I wash my hands of it all!" he cried. "You have been as silly as possible. Would it not have been much wiser to live on our small income, quietly? But you are never satisfied unless you rule, and you see to what you have brought us."

He forgot that he had been quite as eager and determined as his wife, and abandoned himself to the relief of holding others responsible for his failure.

"Besides," he continued, "why is it that we have not succeeded with our children? Eugène deserts us at the decisive moment; Aristide has dragged us down into the mud; and all, even Pascal, have compromised us in one way or another. He, you know, has gone after the Insurgents in the guise of a philanthropist. Such utter stuff!"

As soon as he stopped to draw a long breath, Félicité said, softly:

“And then there is Macquart.”

“Yes, I forgot him,” answered her husband, with considerable violence; “and the mere mention of his name drives me mad. But that is not all. I saw little Silvère at my mother’s the other night, with his hands covered with blood. I did not say anything to you about it at the time, for I thought it would terrify you to know that he had put out the eye of a gendarme. Think of seeing one of our nephews on trial in the court-room! Ah! what a family! As to Macquart—I was nearly crazy to break his head the other night! Yes; I—”

Félicité allowed this torrent of words to flow on uninterrupted. She received all her husband’s reproaches with angelic sweetness, bowing her head as if crushed by her own unworthiness. She sighed profoundly, and at last exclaimed:

“What are we to do? Good heavens! what are we to do? We are overwhelmed with debts—”

“And it is all your fault!” cried Pierre, loudly.

The truth was that the Rougons were in a bad way. Their hopes of success had led them into numerous extravagances. From the beginning of the year 1851, they had been in the habit of offering each evening to the habitués of the yellow salon glasses of syrup, punch—cakes, and even an occasional collation, during which the death of the Republic was drunk. Pierre, too, had put a quarter of his capital into the fund for the purchase of arms.

"The pastry-cook's bill is at least one thousand francs," continued Félicité, in her most dulcet tones; "and we owe twice that to the liquor-dealer. Then there is the baker and the fruiterer."

Pierre gasped in agony. Félicité gave her last thrust:

"And then there are the ten thousand francs you gave for arms!"

"I never did!" he shouted. "I was cheated and robbed. That fool of a Secardot did that, by telling me that the Napoleons were sure to win the day. I merely intended to make an advance. That old scamp shall give me back my money!"

"That he certainly will not do," answered his wife, shrugging her shoulders; "and when we have paid all this we shall not have a sou to buy bread. We shall have to look out at once for some hole in the old Quartier."

This last phrase sounded pretty dreary. Pierre saw the hole in his mind's eye of which his wife spoke. It was there that he should die after having struggled on so many years with the hope that his last days would be his best days. He had robbed his mother uselessly, dabbled in the vilest intrigues, and lied year after year, and for what? The Empire would not pay his debts—this Empire which alone could save him from ruin. He started from his bed:

"No," he cried. "I prefer to be killed by the Insurgents! I will take a musket and go out to meet them!"

"To be sure," answered his wife. "You will not have far to go, for they will be here before long, and that would be as good a way as another to put an end to everything."

Pierre felt as if a bucket of cold water had been poured over his back, and with a shiver he crawled back to bed. He pulled the sheets up over his face and began to weep. This big man often shed tears. They flowed from his eyes as readily as from those of a child.

Félicité expected just this, and smiled with fiendish joy at seeing him so abased. She preserved her melancholy attitude, and the spectacle of her resignation increased her husband's woe.

"Speak!" he said at last; "is there really no straw to snatch?"

"None whatever," she replied. "You have just now stated the situation plainly. There is no one to help us. Our own children have betrayed us!"

"Let us run away from Plassans, then," he said eagerly; "let us go to-night."

"Run away! My poor, dear husband, we should be the talk of the town by to-morrow! Do you not remember that you ordered the gates locked yourself?"

Pierre tossed about on his bed restlessly for a minute or two, and then murmured entreatingly:

"Well, then, why can't you think of something? You have suggested nothing."

Félicité looked up hastily, with a gleam of enjoyment in her eyes, and with a gesture of indifference, replied:

"But I am so foolish, you know. You have told me a hundred times that I knew nothing of politics."

And as her husband relapsed into embarrassed silence, she continued quietly:

"You kept me out of all of your affairs, you know; so how can you expect me to advise you now? You have done all for the best, undoubtedly, for women talk so much, and it is infinitely better that men should steer their own barks by themselves."

She said this in a tone of such delicate irony that her husband did not feel the cruelty of her words. He was simply filled with remorse, and suddenly confessed. He spoke of Eugène's letters, explained his plans and his conduct with the loquacity of a man who clears his conscience. He interrupted himself constantly to ask: "What would you have done in my place?" or "Was I not right? How could I act differently?" Félicité would not make the smallest sign. She listened with the cold impassibility of a judge, but in reality her enjoyment was exquisite. She had him at last under her thumb, and she played with him as a cat plays with a mouse.

"But wait!" exclaimed Rougon. "I will show you Eugène's letters, and then you will understand better."

She caught him by the sleeve, but he broke away from her. He spread out the letters before her, and then returning to bed, read some of them aloud. She smiled pityingly, for her compassion was really aroused.

"Now," he said; "what have you to say? Do you see any way of saving us from ruin?"

She seemed to be absorbed in thought.

"You are a woman of no ordinary intelligence," he continued, caressingly. "I made a great mistake in not taking you at once into my confidence."

"Let us say no more about that," she interrupted; "I, on the contrary, think if you had more courage—" and as he hung on her words, she added with a smile:

"But you must promise not to distrust me again. You will tell me everything in future, will you not? And will you always consult me?"

He swore that he would do precisely as she said in all such matters in future. Then Félicité went to bed, and with her lips close to her husband's ear, explained her plans and views.

According to her the panic was greater than ever throughout the town. Pierre must preserve an heroic attitude among the appalled inhabitants. As for herself, she did not believe the Insurgents were so near. Besides, in any event, the Rougons would be recompensed, for after they had played the rôle of preservers, that of martyrs was not to be disdained.

Félicité was so much in earnest, and spoke with so much conviction, that her husband, surprised at first by the simplicity of her plan, which was mainly characterized by audacity, ended in regarding it with the utmost approval, and promised to conform to all her wishes.

"You must not forget that it was I who saved you," murmured the old lady, in a coaxing voice.

They kissed each other and said good-night. But they neither of them fell asleep, and Pierre, who lay looking at the round spot made by the night-lamp on the ceiling, turned to his wife and said something in a low voice.

"No, no," murmured Félicité, with a shiver. "It would be too cruel—"

"Pshaw!" he answered. "Don't you see we could employ Macquart, and so get rid of him?"

Félicité seemed quite struck by this idea. She reflected, and then with some hesitation stammered out:

"You are right, possibly. We should be very foolish to have any scruples when it is a question of life and death. Let me attend to it. I will go to-morrow and see Macquart, and ascertain if we can come to any arrangements. You would quarrel with him and spoil everything. Good-night, my poor, dear man. I think our troubles are over."

They embraced each other again, and at last fell asleep. And on the ceiling the circle of light flickered and winked like a huge eye glaring down on these two persons, whose sleep was haunted by guilty dreams.

The next day before light Félicité went to the Mayor's, instructed by Pierre as to where she should find Macquart. She carried in a napkin a uniform of the National Guards. The Concierge conducted her to the dressing-room, which was temporarily transformed into a prison cell.

Macquart had been shut up in this dressing-room for two days and two nights, and had had ample time for reflection. At first he had been tempted to kick down the door, hoping that his brother was in the next room, and meaning to strangle him then, or later, if the Insurgents should come. But as hours went on, he grew calmer in the gathering twilight, and began to pay some attention to the luxuries surrounding him. Monsieur Garcounet was wealthy; his tastes were delicate and refined, and this room was exquisitely arranged. The divan was soft and

luxurious; perfumes, soaps, and pomades were on the dressing-table and marble washstand, and the light fell softly down from above. Macquart, in this perfume-laden air, fell asleep, thinking that "these confounded rich people were pretty fortunate."

He covered himself with a violet-scented sofa blanket, supported himself on innumerable pillows, and slept until morning. When he opened his eyes, a thread of sunlight glanced down from the window above. He looked around the room, and came to the conclusion that he had never before seen so comfortable a place devoted to washing. It would not be a difficult matter, he thought, to keep himself clean with so many little pots and vials. He thought with some bitterness of all he might have had in this life. He wondered if he had not made a mistake, and if it would not have been wiser to have been on good terms with the Rougons. But he dismissed the thought. The Rougons were rascals who had robbed him, but he was not especially vindictive, for the softness of the cushions and the warmth of the room had soothed down his anger. He wondered vaguely if the Insurgents had abandoned him, and if the Republic were not a grand imposition. These Rougon people were lucky creatures after all.

He recalled his useless infamies, his incessant warfares against the other members of his family. As to Silvère, he did not count; he was a foolish enthusiast, and would never amount to anything.

He himself was now alone. His wife was dead, his children had left him, and he would die in a corner

without a cent, like a dog. It might not be too late for him to change his politics after all! As he said this, he looked at the marble washstand, and felt a strong desire to wash his hands with a certain paste which he saw in a crystal box. Macquart, like all do-nothings, who are supported by their wives and children, had all the tastes of a hair-dresser. Although he wore patched breeches, he liked to put highly-scented oils on his head, and passed hours at his barber's, where they talked politics, and who gave him a little gentle combing between two discussions. The temptation was too strong. Macquart went to the stand; he washed his face and hands, combed and perfumed himself. He made use of all the bottles, all the soaps, and all the powders. But his greatest joy was in the Mayor's towels—they were so soft and so thick. He buried his face in them with delight. When he was scented and pomaded and felt good from head to foot, he threw himself again on the divan, more disposed than ever to measures of conciliation. He felt a growing contempt for the Republic ever since he had put his nose into the Mayor's scent-bottles. He was quite sure that it was time to make peace with his brother. He wondered what he had best ask as the price of his treason. His hatred was as great as ever, but this was one of those moments when in utter silence and solitude one tells one's self plain truths, and finds excuses for one's own cowardice and indifference. Antoine finally made up his mind to send for his brother the next morning. But when the next morning came, and Félicité appeared, he realized that he was needed, and at once was on his guard.

The negotiation was long, and managed with infinite art. The two exchanged vague complaints: Félicité, surprised at finding Antoine quite polite after the scene that had previously taken place on Sunday evening, assumed a tone of gentle reproach. She deplored the hatred that divided the family; but then he had calumniated his brother in such a way that poor Rougon was quite beside himself.

"My brother never behaved like a brother toward me," answered Macquart, violently. "Did he ever assist me in any way? No; he would have let me die in my garret. At one time he seemed kindly disposed, and gave me two hundred francs. I was then sorry that I had said any harm of him; I went about saying that he had a good heart after all."

This signified—

"If you had continued to furnish me with money, I would have been charmed to aid you instead of opposing you. It is all your own fault; you should have bought me."

Félicité understood him so well that she replied

"I know; you have accused us of harshness, because you fancied us better off than we were; but you were mistaken, my poor brother; we are really poor people, and have never been able to follow the dictates of our hearts toward you."

She hesitated a moment, and then went on:

"We, of course, could under certain circumstances make a sacrifice. But we are poor—very poor."

Macquart pricked up his ears. "I have them," he thought. Then, without appearing to notice the indirect offer of his sister-in-law, he went on to recount all his various afflictions—the death of his wife, and the flight of his children. Félicité, on her side, spoke of the crisis through which the country was passing. She pretended that the Republic had ruined them, and moaned over an epoch which forced one brother to imprison another. She dropped a word or two about the galleys.

"I am not at all concerned," answered Macquart. "I defy you all."

She exclaimed at this.

"You do not understand," she cried. "I said this only to show you that we would never abandon you. I have come, my dear Antoine, to give you the means of flight."

They looked full in each other's eyes before they entered on the contest.

"What conditions do you make?" he asked, at last.

"None whatever," was the reply.

She seated herself on the sofa by his side, and continued in a decided voice:

"And even after passing the frontier you should need a note of a thousand francs, I could manage to let you have it."

Again there was a silence.

"If the affair is straightforward and honest," murmured Antoine, with a contemplative air. "You know I do not care to be mixed up in any of your manœuvres."

"But there are no manœuvres," answered Félicité,

smiling at the scruples of the old rascal. "Nothing could be more simple. You will leave this room ; go at once to your mother's, and hide there until midnight ; and then you and your friends will come and recapture this building."

Macquart could not conceal the surprise he felt. He could not grasp the meaning of this proposition.

"I thought," he said, "that you were victorious."

"It is impossible for me to stop to explain," answered the old woman, impatiently. "Do you accept my proposal?"

"No ; I do not accept it. I wish time for reflection. I should be very foolish to risk a fortune for a thousand francs."

Félicité rose.

"Do as you think best," she said, coldly. "You have really very little perception of your position. You have seen fit to treat me as if I were some old beggar, and when I, in my kindness, extend a helping hand to you, you do not choose to be saved. Well, then, do as you choose. Wait until the authorities come back. As for me, I wash my hands of it all."

She was at the door.

"But," he answered, imploringly, "give me some explanations, will you not? How can I conclude a bargain without knowing more? For two days I have heard nothing of what is going on outside. How do I know that you are not deceiving me?"

"You are a perfect simpleton," answered Félicité, turning at these words. "You are very wrong in not

submitting blindly to us. A thousand francs is a very nice sum, and I should advise you to accept it."

He still hesitated.

"But when we have taken this building again, what then?"

"Ah! that I cannot tell you," she answered, with a smile. "There may be a shot or two."

He looked at her.

"Tell me," he said, in a hoarse voice, "tell me the truth. Do you not intend to have me shot?"

Félicité colored. She had thought certainly that a ball might do her the great favor of disembarassing her of Antoine, which would be to her a clear saving of a thousand francs.

"What an idea!" she murmured. "How can you have such terrible ideas?"

She added more quietly:

"And do you accept? You fully understand, do you not?"

Macquart had fully understood. He saw that it was a trap now proposed to him.

He understood nothing about it, which was all the more reason for his driving a better bargain. After speaking of the Republic as a mistress he had repudiated, he recounted the risks he ran, and ended by asking for two thousand francs. But Félicité was firm, and they argued until she promised to procure for him, on his return to France, a place where he would have nothing to do, and which would be lucrative all the same.

Then the bargain was concluded. She made him put on the uniform of the National Guards, which she had brought with her. He could walk quietly out into the Square, and thence to his mother's. About midnight he was to get together all the Republicans he knew, and telling them that the Hôtel de Ville was empty, he would lead them there at once.

Félicité gave him two hundred francs, and promised him eight hundred more the next day. Thus it was that the Rougons risked the very last franc they owned. When Félicité went down-stairs she waited a few moments to see Macquart come out.

"It is all right," said Félicité, to her husband, as she went into the room where he sat. "It will be at midnight, you know. I wish heartily they could be all shot. Would they not have torn us to pieces gladly only yesterday?"

"You are right," answered Pierre; "any one in our place would do just the same!"

This morning, it was Wednesday, Pierre was especially careful with his dress. His wife combed his hair, and tied his cravat. She twisted him about, and turned him around like a child who is going to a distribution of prizes. Then, when he was ready, she told him that he was very satisfactory, and that he could stand his own before them all. His big round face was deadly pale with the effort it cost him to assume an air of dignity, and of heroic determination. She herself accompanied him as far as the door, all the time murmuring advice in his ear: he must not flinch, no matter how great the panic

might be. He must keep the gates more closely shut than ever.

What a day that was! The Rougons still talk of it as of a glorious and decisive battle. Pierre went straight to the Hôtel de Ville, looking neither to the right nor the left. He installed himself in a stately manner as if he never intended to leave the place. He sent a note to Rondier to signify that he had resumed the reins.

"You will watch the gates," he wrote, knowing that these words might become a matter of history, "I will mount guard within, and compel the Insurgents to respect persons and property. It is now, when evil passions rise to the surface, that good citizens should seek to stifle them at the peril of their lives." The style, the very faults of orthography, added an heroic element to this note, which was antique in its laconism.

Not one of the Provisionary Council appeared. The two who had held out longest, and Granoux himself, remained prudently at home: of the whole number only Rougon, in his Presidential arm-chair, remained at his post. He did not condescend to make an attempt to bring them together; he was there: that was quite enough. Sublime spectacle! characterized by a local journal, at a later date as, "Courage and Duty hand-in-hand."

Pierre was absolutely alone all the morning in this great building whose high ceilings resounded with the noise of his heels. The doors all stood wide open, and he walked from room to room with such an air of importance that the Concierge, meeting him several times in the

corridors, saluted him with an air of respectful surprise. He was seen at one window after another, and notwithstanding the sharp cold he even several times emerged upon the balcony with piles of paper in his hand, as if overwhelmed with business.

Then at midnight he made a tour of inspection through the town. He went to the gates, spoke of a possible attack, and expressed his fears that the Insurgents were nearer than was supposed. He relied, he said, on the well-known courage of the National Guards—he knew they were ready to die in defence of a good cause.

When he returned from this inspection, with the slow dignity of a man who has set his house in order, and who has only Death to which to look forward, he recognized the fact that all the small shop-keepers he passed looked at him with consternation, and evident surprise that one of themselves, a mere merchant, could have the audacity to attempt to stand against an army.

The anxiety throughout the town was at its height. The inhabitants were in momentary expectation of the arrival of the Insurgents. The news of Macquart's escape was already buzzed about. It was said that he had been delivered by his friends, the Reds, and that he was only waiting until night when he would set fire to the town, and murder the inhabitants. As to the Ville Neuve, the lawyers and retired merchants, who only the evening before had abused the yellow salon, they were utterly surprised and dared not openly attack a man of such courage.

They contented themselves with saying that it was the sheerest folly to brave the rebels in this way, and that this useless heroism would draw down on Plassans greater misfortune. About three o'clock they arranged a Deputation to wait upon Pierre, who received them with words that were absolutely sublime.

The Deputation, after complimenting him on his patriotism, implored him not to dream of resistance. But in a loud voice he talked of Duty to his Country—Order and Liberty! He said he had no intention of insisting upon any one following his example, but he intended to obey the dictates of his heart and conscience.

"I stand alone, gentlemen," he said; "and am therefore able to assume all the responsibility. No one but myself will be compromised. If there must be a victim, I offer myself, with the earnest hope that the sacrifice of my life will save my fellow-citizens."

A Notary, the head of the Deputation, said in reply, that Rougon was going to certain death.

"I know it," replied Pierre, solemnly. "I know it, and am ready!"

The gentlemen all looked at him. This "I am ready!" struck them as being the finest thing they had ever heard. "Who was ever as brave as that?" they asked each other.

The Notary conjured him to summon the police about him, but he answered that the blood of these men was doubly precious at this time, and that he would not call upon them except in the last extremity. The Deputation

slowly withdrew in a great state of excitement, and one hour later all Plassans spoke of Rougon as a hero. A few cowards called him a madman. Toward evening Rougon was much astonished at seeing Granoux rush into the room. The old merchant called him "greatest of men," and declared that he was determined to die at his side. The "I am ready!" had moved him to the deepest enthusiasm. Pierre was touched by the devotion of this poor man, and determined that he should be publicly complimented by the Prefect, which would naturally humiliate the others who had deserted him in such a cowardly fashion. Granoux and Rougon therefore waited the approach of night alone in the deserted rooms of the Mayor.

At the same hour Aristide was in a great state of uneasiness, walking up and down his room. He had read Vuillet's article with utter astonishment, and his father's acts amazed him still more. He had seen him at a window in a white cravat and black coat, and so perfectly unmoved by the approach of danger that all his son's preconceived ideas were entirely upset. That the Insurgents would return victorious was the belief of the entire town. Aristide wavered, however; he dared not go himself to his parents, and sent Angèle, who, when she returned, said to her husband with her little drawl:

"Your mother wishes to see you. She is not angry, but she has a look as if she were laughing at you. She said several times that she thought you had best put your scarf in your pocket."

Aristide was intensely annoyed. He hurried to La Rue

de Banne, ready to make any concession demanded. His mother received him with a disdainful smile.

"Ah! my dear boy!" she said, as soon as she saw him; "you are none too wise, I fear!"

"How is one to know anything," he cried, angrily, "in a place like Plassans! I am absolutely becoming stupefied. There is never a word of intelligence to be obtained here—it is as if one were shut up in a prison. Ah! if I had only gone to Paris with Eugène!"

Then seeing the mocking smile on his mother's lips, he continued:

"You have not been very kind or generous toward me, mother," he said. "I know perhaps more than you think. I know that my brother has kept you thoroughly informed of what was going on, and yet you have never given me the smallest hint that I could find useful."

"You knew this, did you?" said Félicité, suddenly becoming very serious and suspicious; "then you are more stupid than I supposed. Have you been opening my letters then, like another person of my acquaintance?"

"No; I don't do that," answered Aristide, with great coolness; "but I listen at doors."

This frankness did not displease the old lady. She smiled again, and said more gently:

"Then why is it that you have not come over to us before?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," answered the young man, somewhat embarrassed; "I had not the most absolute faith in you. You receive such terrible brutes: my father-in-law

for example, Granoux and others, and I did not wish to go too fast—" He hesitated, and then went on uneasily :

"But you are certain now of the success of the Coup d'État, are you not?"

"I!" cried Félicité, who was exasperated by her son's doubts; "I am sure of nothing, you know."

"And yet you sent me word to take the scarf off my arm?"

"Of course; because all these men are laughing at you."

Aristide, with his hands in his pocket, stood with his eyes riveted on the branches running over the yellow paper. His mother was indignant at seeing him hesitate.

"I return to my opinion," she said; "you are certainly none too wise, and yet you are offended that we did not read Eugène's letters to you! Why you, with your constant hesitations and uncertainties, would have spoiled everything. You always hesitate—"

"Yes, that is true," he said, interrupting his mother, and riveting his eyes upon her with a cold, stern glare; "but I do not think you know me yet. I would set fire to the town any time if I wished to warm my feet. I am tired of eating dry bread, and I wish to make my fortune. I shall not run any risks now, you may be sure of that."

He uttered these words with such bitterness that his mother recognized her own blood in this mad determination to succeed.

She said, softly :

"Your father has a great deal of courage."

"Yes," he answered, with a sneer; "a great deal. He has a neat head, and reminds me of Leonidas at Thermopylæ. Was it you, mother, who arranged his hair in that way?"

Presently he said, more gayly:

"Papa is not a man to allow himself to be killed, unless it is to his advantage! That I know very well!"

"And you are right," answered his mother. "You must wait until to-morrow. I cannot say another word now. My lips are absolutely tied."

He said no more and went away, while Félicité, looking after him from the window, felt all her old partiality revive, and said to herself that she could never have had the courage to allow him to leave without giving him a hint of the truth.

For the third time in this troubled epoch, night fell on Plassans. The town was in great fear. Every house-owner retired to his own dwelling, and bolted the doors with great noise and ceremony. The general feeling was that there would be no Plassans the next morning—that it would be level with the ground, or would have ascended to heaven, in clouds of smoke.

When Rougon went home to dinner, he found the streets absolutely deserted. This solitude rendered him very sad and melancholy. Toward the end of the meal his heart became so softened that he asked his wife if it were really necessary to carry out the insurrection which Macquart was preparing.

"Had you seen the way in which these men greeted

me!" he said. "I really can't see the use of killing people. Can we manage our little affairs without that?"

"What a simpleton you are!" cried Félicité, angrily. "It was all your idea, and now you wish to draw back! I tell you, you would never do anything without me. Go your own road. Do you think the Republicans will spare you if they once get you in their clutches?"

Rougon returned to his self-appointed post; he sent Granoux off with orders to send the National Guards at once to the Hôtel de Ville in small numbers and as secretly as possible. Rondier, the Parisian Bourgeois, who had strayed into the Provinces, received no warning, lest he should ruin the whole affair by preaching humanity.

About eleven o'clock the court-yard was full of National Guards. Rougon struck terror to their souls. He told them that the Republicans who had remained at Plassans had resolved on a last desperate blow, and he assured them that he had discovered this through his secret police.

When he had finished drawing a most sanguinary picture of the massacre which these terrible creatures would inaugurate, he gave the order not to utter another word, not even a whisper, and to extinguish all the lights. He took a gun himself. All that day Rougon moved as if in a dream. He felt as if he were simply his wife's puppet; that she pulled all the strings, and he had such confidence in her that he would have allowed a rope to be placed around his neck, with the conviction that his wife would come to the rescue at the last moment.

To increase the noise and terrify the sleeping town to

a greater degree, he bade Granoux go to the Cathedral and sound the tocsin as soon as the first gun was fired.

In the shadow—in the dark silence of the court—the National Guards, in anxious terror, waited—with their eyes riveted on the porch, as eager to discharge their guns as if they expected a band of wolves.

Macquart had spent the whole day at Aunt Dide's. He had stretched himself on the old chest, regretting the divan of the Mayor's. He was eager to spend the two hundred francs which absolutely burned his pocket, but was compelled to do it only in imagination. His mother moved about with a pale face, and never opened her lips—stiff and silent as an automaton. She knew nothing and cared less for the fears which convulsed the town. She was a thousand leagues away from Plassans, absorbed in the one idea which kept her eyes wide open and fixed.

Antoine sent her to buy a roasted chicken from a restaurant near by; and after he had devoured it, he said, with a sneer:

“Only people who work and know how to manage their affairs can eat chicken! You have always wasted everything, unless, as I sometimes believe, you are giving your savings to Silvère. He has a mistress, you know, and if you have stored up a nice little sum for him, he will make it fly some day.”

He laughed with brutal enjoyment. The money he had in his pocket—the treason he was preparing—the certainty that he had sold himself at a good price—filled him with that contentment of bad people who gloat over the evil they do. Aunt Dide heard nothing but Silvère's name.

"Have you seen him?" she asked, opening her lips hastily.

"Who? Silvère?" answered Antoine. "He was strolling about among the Insurgents, with a girl all in red on his arm. If he were hit by a stray ball, it would be a very good thing."

The old woman looked at him strangely, and in a measured voice said:

"And why—pray?"

"Because he is so stupid!" answered Macquart, somewhat embarrassed. "I have arranged all my affairs, and am not a child, you know."

But Aunt Dide murmured:

"There was blood on his hands! They will kill him! His uncle will send the gendarmes to find him!"

"What are you muttering, old woman?" asked her son. "If you have anything to say, out with it! I prefer that people should accuse me openly. If I talked Republicanism sometimes to the boy, it was simply to put some common-sense notions into his head. I like Liberty, but I don't want it to degenerate into license; and as to Rougon, I respect him. He had both head and courage!"

"Did he have the gun?" interrupted Aunt Dide, who could not think of anything but Silvère.

"The gun? Oh, yes! He has Macquart's gun, then, has he?" replied Antoine, after glancing at the mantel where the gun usually hung. "I think I saw it in his hands. A nice thing, too, to carry under one arm and a girl on the other! He is an absolute fool!" And he went on to utter some coarse pleasantries.

Aunt Dide walked away without a word.

Toward evening Antoine put on a blouse, pulled a hat over his eyes, and went out. He went down to the old Quartier and glided into house after house. All those strong Republicans who had not followed the Insurgents assembled about nine o'clock in a Café, where Macquart had bade them await his coming. When there were about fifty men assembled, he made an incendiary address. He told them he had a personal vengeance to satisfy—a shameful yoke to throw off—and finished by assuring them that they could obtain possession of the Hôtel de Ville in ten minutes. He had just left it; it was vacant. The red flag could float over the building that very night, if they pleased. The men talked together a little. They said to each other that the Insurgents were at the gates, and it would not be honorable in themselves not to regain the power which would enable them to receive their brothers with arms and gates thrown wide open. No one distrusted Macquart. His hatred against the Rougons, the personal vengeance of which he spoke, were securities for his loyalty. It was agreed that all who had guns should go home at once and seek them, and that at midnight they should all reassemble on the Square.

But they had no balls. They decided finally that they would not load their arms with more than powder. It was unnecessary, one said to another, as there would be no resistance of course. Once again did Plassans have armed men stealing along the streets. When Macquart got his men all together, he advanced boldly. He

knocked at the door, and when the Concierge, who had been well drilled, asked what they wanted, they threatened him so fiercely that the man, pretending to be horribly frightened, threw the door wide open.

Then Macquart said, loudly :

“Come in, my friends.”

This was the signal agreed upon. He darted swiftly to one side, and while the Republicans dashed forward, the darkness of the court-yard was suddenly illuminated, and a shower of balls fell among them. The National Guards, exasperated by waiting, eager to be delivered from the nightmare which had weighed upon them in this dark court-yard, had all discharged their pieces at the same moment with feverish haste. The glare was so great that Macquart saw Rougon, in the yellow light, taking deliberate aim at himself. He remembered Félicité's blush, and ran away, saying :

“That rascal means to kill me! He owes me eight hundred francs.”

Frightful outcries broke on the silence of the night. The Republicans shouted “Treason!” and fired in their turn. A National Guard fell in the doorway. The Republicans took to flight, shouting through the silent streets :

“They are assassinating our brothers!”

Their despairing voices found no echo.

The defenders of Order having reloaded their pieces, rushed across the vacant Square like madmen, and discharged their guns into every dark doorway where the

flickering shadows, thrown by a street lamp, induced them to fancy some rebel had taken refuge. This went on for ten minutes.

The uproar burst like a thunder-bolt over the sleeping town. The inhabitants, awakened by this infernal fusillade, started up with their teeth chattering with fear. Nothing would have tempted them to look out at the windows. Slowly on the air, still resounding with the musketry, fell the sounds of the Cathedral bell sounding the tocsin with its irregular rhythm, reminding one of some gigantic copper caldron beaten by an angry child. This sound, which the Bourgeois had never before heard, terrified them more than the fire-arms. And they fancied, too, they heard the noise of cannon rattling over the pavement. They went back to bed, and pulled the bed-clothes over their heads, making themselves as small as possible, while their wives at their sides held their breath in dismay.

The National Guards on the ramparts had of course also heard these reports. They believed the Insurgents to have entered the city by some subterranean passage, and in little bands of four and five, hurried through the streets to discover what was going on. But Rougon sent them back instantly with severe reproaches for deserting their posts. Filled with consternation at this, for in their panic they had really left the gates open and without a soul to guard them, they ran back with a most frightful din and noise. For an hour Plassans believed that a pillaging army was within the gates of the town. The fusillade—the tocsin—

the marching and countermarching of the National Guards—their arms which they dragged after them like clubs, and their shouts were absolutely appalling. Naturally all the inhabitants supposed the Insurgents to be in possession of the town, and they lay in their beds shivering with terror.

Granoux still sounded the tocsin which, as silence fell upon the town, became more and more dreary. Rougon himself could bear the sobbing notes no longer; he ran to the Cathedral, the small door of which he found open, and the beadle standing on the sill.

“For heaven’s sake!” cried Rougon, “do stop that noise. It is like some one crying.”

“But it is not I, sir,” answered the beadle, in a despairing tone. “It is Monsieur Granoux, who is in the tower. I had taken out the hammer of the bell by orders of the Curé, just to prevent the tocsin from being rung. Monsieur Granoux would not hear reason, and he climbed up; but I can’t imagine how the devil he makes the noise.”

Rougon hastily ascended the narrow corkscrew staircase, which led to the bells, calling as he went:

“Enough! Enough! In the name of goodness, stop!”

When he was high up, he saw, in a ray of moonlight which streamed through an opening, Granoux, without a hat, pounding with a great hammer. He went at his work with a tremendous air of resolution. He leaned back, and then came forward with wild impetus, hitting

the sonorous brass as if he wished to split it. All his stout form trembled with earnest enthusiasm. He was like a blacksmith, hammering hot iron, but he was a short and bald blacksmith, in a black coat.

Surprise nailed Rougon to the stairs. It was indeed a grotesque sight, and he understood the strange sounds which had electrified the town. He shouted to him to stop, but the other did not hear him. Rougon leaned forward and pulled his coat. Granoux then turned and recognized him.

"Ah!" he cried, in a triumphant voice, "you heard me, then, did you? I tried at first to make a sound with my fists, but I could not, and fortunately I found this hammer. Let me do it a little longer."

But Rougon tore him away. Granoux wiped his brow, and exacted a promise from his companion that he should tell every one the next day that it was with a simple hammer that he had made all this noise.

Toward morning Rougon thought he had best go and reassure Félicité. By his orders, the National Guards were in the Hôtel de Ville. He had not allowed the bodies to be removed, saying that an example was required by the people in the old Quartier. Consequently, when he came out of the building, he slipped on the hand of one of these murdered men, as it lay on the edge of the sidewalk. He nearly fell. This soft hand, which he crushed under his heel, made him sick and faint with disgust. He strode through the deserted streets with the feeling that a bloody fist threatened him in the rear.

"There are four lying on the ground," he said, as he crossed his threshold.

Then husband and wife looked at each other, stupefied at their crime. The lamp gave a tone like yellow wax to their excessive pallor.

"You left them there?" asked Félicité. "They ought to be found there."

"Most assuredly—I was not the one to pick them up. They lie on their backs. I stepped on something soft—"

He put up his foot, and looked at his shoe; the heel was red with blood! While he put on a pair of boots, Félicité resumed:

"Very well, that is settled, then! They can't say now that you fire only at looking-glasses!"

This fusillade, which the Rougons had arranged, that they might be definitively accepted as the preservers of Plassans, brought the whole town to their feet in humble gratitude.

The day was pale, gray and wintry. The inhabitants at last ventured out from between their sheets, and as the report ran that the Insurgents had taken flight, leaving their dead in the gutters, Plassans went in a body to investigate. A curious crowd gathered about the four bodies, which were horribly mutilated—one especially, had three balls through the head; a portion of the skull was carried away, leaving the brain naked. But the most horrible of the four was the National Guard who had fallen under the porch. The man was well known to them. Two of the others were hatters' apprentices;

the third was unknown. And before the pools of red blood that stained the pavement, groups stood, open-mouthed and as terrified as if they expected to be treated with the same summary justice, if they did not kiss the hand which was raised to save them from the demagogues.

The panic of the night was increased fourfold by the sight of these bodies. The true story of this fusillade was never known. The firing of the combatants—Granoux and his hammer—the tramping and rattling of the National Guards through the streets, had filled the ears of the town with such a noise that most of the citizens imagined a terrible battle had taken place.

When the conquerors multiplied the number of their adversaries, and spoke of five hundred, there was a general outcry; the Bourgeois declared they had seen from their windows a dense body of Insurgents, passing for nearly an hour. Never could five hundred men have made such a disturbance. It was an army that had stolen into the city through some subterranean passage. Rougon had used the phrase, "They came in through the earth," as a figure of speech; but it was seized upon as a fact, for the guards at the gate swore that not a man had passed them going out or coming in. It is true that they avoided making any mention of their own rapid rushes through the city. The most sensible and shrewdest persons adopted the belief that the Insurgents had entered the town in some mysterious way. Before long a rumor of treason was in circulation, as the men led by

Macquart were not likely to hold their tongues; but these rumors were attributed to the disappointment of the Republicans.

It was asserted, on the other hand, that Macquart was Rougon's prisoner, and that he was kept in some dark hole, where he was dying of hunger. This terrible tale caused every one to regard Rougon with more admiration than before.

Thus it was that this stout, bleached-looking Bourgeois became a terrible gentleman, of whom no one dared speak lightly.

He had received a baptism of blood. The dwellers in the Old Quartier were mute with terror before the dead bodies, but about ten o'clock, when the people from the Ville Neuve arrived, the Square resounded with stifled exclamations. They spoke of the first attack and of the broken mirror, but this time, with great respect, they called Rougon a hero. The corpses, with wide-open eyes, looked at these gentlemen, who shuddered as they said that civil war was a dismal thing, and had its sad necessities. The Notary, the man who had headed the Deputation, went from group to group, repeating the "I am ready!" of the energetic man to whom the safety of their town was entirely due. Those who had jeered most loudly at the forty and one, as well as those who had boldly stigmatized the Rougons as Insurgents and cowards, who fired their pieces in the air, were the first to talk of the Crown of Laurel, which should be voted to the citizen of whom Plassans would be always proud.

"For the pools of blood on the sidewalk were drying, and the dead told of the excesses committed by the party of Disorder, Rapine and Murder, and of the iron hand that was needed to enforce peace."

Granoux in his turn received congratulations. The story of the hammer was known. Only by an innocent, almost unconscious lie, he pretended, that having been the first to see the Insurgents, he hurried to the bell in order to sound the alarm. Without this, the National Guards would all have been murdered.

His exploit was called "prodigious!" He was thence forward always spoken of as "that gentleman who sounded the tocsin with a hammer." Although this epithet was somewhat lengthy, Granoux accepted it as a title of nobility, and the word "hammer" was never uttered in his presence without his regarding it as the most delicate flattery.

Just as the bodies were being carried away, Aristide came to look at them, with cold, dispassionate eyes. With his hand, the one that the evening before he had worn in a sling and which was now free, he opened the blouse worn by one of the dead men to examine the wound. This examination was a thorough one, and seemed to have been undertaken to remove some doubt. His lips were tightly compressed, and he hurried away to hasten the distribution of the *Independent*, in which was a long article he had contributed.

As he traversed the streets, he remembered his mother's word, "You will see to-morrow." He had indeed seen, and even his stolidity was shaken.

Meanwhile, Rougon began to find his victory somewhat of an embarrassment. Alone in the Mayor's private room, he listened to the dull stormings of the crowd below, and felt it utterly impossible for him to do what he knew to be expected of him, that was, to show himself upon the balcony. The blood through which he had trod hung like lead upon his feet. He asked himself what he should do until evening. His poor head was stunned by the excitement and events of the night, and he was literally unable to give an order, or suggest an expedient. What would be the end? Where was Félicité dragging him? Would there be any more people whom he would be called upon to slay? He shivered; doubts assailed him. He saw the ramparts surrounded by an avenging army of the Republicans, when, all at once, he heard a hoarse shout:

“The Insurgents! The Insurgents!”

He started up, and lifting a curtain looked down on the crowd running distractedly across the Square. In a moment, as brief as a lightning flash, he saw himself ruined and assassinated. He cursed his wife, and cursed the entire town.

He turned and looked behind him, as if seeking some way of escape. The crowd burst into wild applause; at the same moment there followed shouts of joy which made the very windows rattle. Again he looked from the windows. The women were waving their handkerchiefs, and the men shaking hands with each other. Rougon could not understand what he saw. It seemed

to him as if his very brain were turning. The huge, silent and deserted building weighed upon him like a nightmare.

Rougon, when he made his confessions to Félicité, was utterly unable to say how long this season of intense suspense lasted. He could only remember that it was a sound of steps which finally aroused him. He expected to see men in blouses armed with pitchforks and axes; instead of which, he beheld the City Council in black coats and with radiant faces. Not a Member was missing. All these gentlemen had suddenly recovered their health on the reception of the good news. Granoux threw himself into the arms of his friend.

"The soldiers have come!" he cried; "the soldiers!"

And, in fact, a regiment, under the command of Colonel Masson and of the Prefect of the Department, had arrived. The glitter of their guns on the plain had been taken for the approach of the Insurgents. Rougon's emotion was so great that tears rolled down his cheek. He wept. This heroic citizen wept! The City Council watched these tears fall with respectful admiration. But Granoux fell once more on his friend's neck, exclaiming:

"I am so happy! You know I always speak the truth, and I am not ashamed, gentlemen, to acknowledge that we have all been afraid—all, except this grand creature. His courage has been absolutely sublime. I said just now to my wife, that Rougon was a great man, and that he ought to be decorated."

The gentlemen went on conversing, while Rougon

endeavored to collect himself—unable to believe in this sudden triumph, he lost all control of his voice and stammered like a child. At last he was able to speak with the dignity befitting the solemnity of the occasion. But this dignity was again shaken by the enthusiasm which greeted him when he appeared on the Square. He heard the voices of the people reiterate that it was he alone who had been unmoved by the universal panic. He drank in this applause with the silent joy of a woman whose unexpressed desires are at last appeased.

The Prefect and the Colonel had entered the town alone, leaving the troops encamped on the road to Lyons. They had lost much time, having been greatly deceived as to the route taken by the Insurgents, whom they now knew to be at Orchères. They had come themselves to Plassans to reassure the populace, and to publish the cruel decree which sequestered the property of the Insurgents, and condemned to death those who were found with arms in their hands. Colonel Masson smiled slightly when the huge iron bolts of the Roman gate were drawn with a frightful rattle. Rondier received these gentlemen and told them of Rougon's brilliant acts—of the three days' panic, and of the glorious victory of the preceding night. Consequently, when the Prefect entered the room where Rougon stood, he advanced toward him with outstretched hands, congratulated him, and implored him to continue to watch over the town until the return of the authorities, adding that he would not fail to report his magnificent conduct.

Notwithstanding the cold, everybody was at the windows—Félicité leaning far out of hers at the risk of falling, and pale with joy. Aristide had just come in with a number of the *Independent*, in which he had declared himself squarely in favor of the Coup d'État, which he welcomes as "the dawn of Liberty in Order, and Order in Liberty." He made a delicate allusion to the yellow salon and to the great minds who reflected in silence and allowed insults to pass over in silence, showing their true courage and heroism only in the hour of need. He considered this last phrase especially happy. His mother was extremely grateful, and embraced the dear boy, and placed him next her on her sofa.

The Marquis de Carnavant was there also, eager and quietly attentive.

When the Prefect shook hands with Rougon, Félicité wept.

"See! see!" she cried to Aristide. "He pressed your father's hand. Look! He is still holding it!"

She glanced at all the windows which overlooked the Square, and at the crowds of heads in each.

"How furious they must be! Look at Madame Pierotte; she is biting her handkerchief. And the Notary's daughters and Madame Massicot! Did you ever see such long faces in your life? Yes, it is our turn now, good people!"

She watched the whole scene with eager interest, her lithe body quivering as she gazed. She interpreted the least gesture, and invented the words she could not hear,

and said half aloud that her husband made a capital bow. Once she quite sobbed when the Prefect accorded a word or two to Granoux, probably in reference to the hammer, for the old merchant blushed like a young girl, and with a deprecating gesture seemed to say that he had done only his duty.

But she was still more vexed at her husband's foolish kindness in introducing Monsieur Vuillet to these gentlemen. Vuillet, it is true, kept so close to them that it was impossible for Rougon to do otherwise.

"What a manœuvrer!" muttered Félicité. "He sticks his nose in everywhere! And now the Colonel is talking to Pierre. What can he be saying?"

"Oh, my dear!" answered the Marquis, with delicate sarcasm, "he is only complimenting him on having kept the gates so carefully closed!"

"My father saved the town," said Aristide, dryly. "Have you seen the bodies, sir?"

The Marquis made no reply. He went back to the window and dropped into a chair with a little shrug of the shoulders, and a slightly disgusted air.

At this moment Rougon rushed into the room, clasped his wife to his bosom, and exclaimed:

"My best beloved!"

He could say no more. Félicité bade him embrace Aristide also, and told him of the glorious article in the *Independent*. Pierre would have kissed the Marquis on both cheeks had he been bidden to do so. But his wife took him aside and gave him Eugène's letter, which she

had put into an outer envelope. She pretended that it had just been brought in.

He read it and held it toward her with a laugh.

"You are an absolute sorceress!" he said. "You guessed it all. Heaven only knows what follies I should have committed without you! In future we will go into a mutual business. Yes, you are a smart woman."

He put his arm around her, while she exchanged a discreet smile with the Marquis.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD CEMETERY.

IT was on Sunday that the troops reached Plassans and encamped in the Faubourg, while the Prefect and the Colonel went to dine with the Mayor. The night was dark, except that the sky in the north was lighted with strange tawny streaks of yellow, like the copper-colored clouds which so often herald a storm.

The reception accorded by the citizens was very timid; these soldiers smelling of blood—hot from slaughter—passing along in the gray twilight, silent and formidable, disgusted the crowd in the street, and later these men told their tales of fierce reprisals and formidable fusillades, of which the whole country has preserved the memory. The terror of the Coup d'État had begun—that terror which kept the South shivering through long, weary months.

Plassans in her first fright and her hatred of the Insurgents would have welcomed these soldiers with enthusiasm, but now before this sombre regiment the inhabitants asked themselves if they had not committed some political sins themselves which merited a few shot.

The authorities returned in two carriages hired at Sainte-Roure. Their entrance was by no means triumphant. Rougon vacated the Mayor's arm-chair without regret. His hand was played, and he awaited his recompense from Paris.

The following day came a letter from Eugène. Félicité had taken care to send her son the numbers of the *Gazette* and *Independent* which, in a second edition, had related the battle of the night and the arrival of the Prefect. Eugène wrote that the nomination of his father to a most desirable position was then on the point of being signed. "But," he added, "I have good news for you. You will also have the ribbon of the Legion of Honor."

Félicité wept. Her husband decorated! Her proudest dreams had never gone so far as that. Rougon, pale with joy, talked about giving a great dinner, and threw to the people on the Square the very last pieces of silver he had in the world.

"Listen to me," he said to his wife; "we will invite Secardot. He has bored me to death with his rosette for a long time. Then Rondier and Granoux, for I should not be sorry for them to feel that their money-bags will never win them the Cross. Vuillet is a skinflint, but we will ask him, too; and you must go in person to invite the Marquis. You know that the Colonel and the Prefect dine at the Mayor's, who has not invited me. He wished to show me how insignificant I was in his eyes, I presume. If he should ask me now, I should tell him that I, too, had friends to dinner. Order everything from the Hotel de Provence. We must overshadow the Mayor."

Félicité started forth on her mission. Pierre, amid all his joy, felt a vague uneasiness. The Coup d'État would pay all his debts. His son Aristide bemoaned his errors, and was penitent; he had gotten rid of Macquart; but he

dreaded some escapade of Pascal's, and was considerably disturbed by fears for Silvère—not that he pitied him the least in the world, but he was very unwilling that the affair of the gendarme should come before the courts. Ah! if an intelligent bullet had only gone through that boy's head.

As his wife had pointed out to him that very morning, all obstacles had fallen before him; his family had worked for his elevation, and Eugène and Aristide, these do-nothings, whose collegiate expenses he had so bitterly regretted, were at last paying the interest on the capital sunk in their education; and now the thought of this miserable Silvère must come to mar this hour of triumph.

While Félicité ran about, busy with preparations for her dinner, Pierre decided to go and make some inquiries for Silvère, but could find out nothing. Pascal had remained behind with the wounded. Rougon then went to the Faubourg, where the troops were encamped, hoping to see Macquart, and pay him the eight hundred francs, which he had gotten together with great difficulty. But when he saw the prisoners guarded by soldiers, with shining fire-arms in their hands, he was afraid of compromising himself, and retreated quietly to his mother's, intending to send her in search of news. When he entered Adelaide's dwelling, night was close at hand. He saw, at first, no one but Macquart, who sat smoking, with his brandy-bottle at his side.

"Is that you?" muttered Macquart; "I am bored to death here. Have you brought the money?"

But Pierre did not reply. He had just perceived his son Pascal leaning over the bed, and eagerly interrogated him. The Doctor, considerably surprised at this anxiety, which he at first attributed to paternal tenderness, answered quietly that the soldiers had taken him prisoner at one time, and that he should have been shot but for the intervention of a brave man whom he did not know. His title of Doctor was his safety-guard, and he had come on with the Regiment. It was a great relief to Pierre to find that he was not to be compromised in this direction. He expressed his joy in eager words, but Pascal checked him.

"My poor grandmother is alarmingly ill," he said. "I brought her back this gun which she so highly valued; and see! she was lying as you see her."

Pierre's eyes had now become accustomed to the darkness, and could discern Aunt Dide lying stiff, cold and dead upon the bed. This poor body, racked by nervous affections ever since it was rocked in the cradle, had at last succumbed. The nerves had, so to speak, eaten away the blood. The dull persistent work of this ardent flesh devouring itself in tardy chastity had made of the unhappy creature a mere mass which only a galvanic battery could move again.

She seemed to have suffered intensely, for on her face, generally of nunlike pallor, were large red spots. The features were horribly convulsed, and the hands clenched and buried in her clinging skirts, which showed the emaciation of her poor body.

Rougon shrugged his shoulders in a surly way. This

heart-breaking sight was to him simply disagreeable; he had company to dinner that day, and he did not wish to be dispirited. His mother had really been most ungenerous and wished to annoy him—by selecting just this time to die. He therefore answered hastily:

“Oh! I have seen her like this an hundred times. Let her rest: that is all any one can do.”

Pascal shook his head.

“No,” he answered, gently; “this attack is like no other she has ever had. I have studied her faithfully, and this is very different. Look at her eyes: they have a peculiar fluidity and a strange clearness. And look at her face: do you not see the frightful tension of the muscles?”

Then leaning over his grandmother, Pascal continued, as if speaking to himself:

“I have seen faces like that before, but they were persons who had been assassinated—who had died of fright. She must have had some terrible shock.”

“But how did the attack come on?” asked Rougon, impatiently—not knowing how to get away.

Pascal did not know; but Macquart, as he filled his glass, said he had sent his mother to buy a bottle of Cognac. She was gone a long time, and when she came in she fell stiff on the floor, without a word. Macquart had carried her to the bed himself.

“The thing that astonishes me,” he said, in conclusion, “is that she did not break the bottle.”

The Doctor thought for a minute, and said at last:

“On my way here, I heard two shots—perhaps they

were shooting some of the prisoners. If she happened to be passing at the moment, the sight of the blood may have thrown her into this state—”

As he spoke he tried to introduce between the close-shut teeth of Aunt Dide a few drops of a restorative which he took from a little box he always carried about him.

Macquart asked his brother again if he had brought the money.

And Rougon, glad of this diversion, answered that he had.

Macquart, seeing that he was to be paid, now began to complain. He understood only too late the weight and consequences of his treason, or he would have asked five times as much. A thousand francs would not have been too much. His children had deserted him; he was alone in the world, and obliged to leave France; and he actually wept as he spoke of his exile.

“Will you have the eight hundred francs?” said Rougon, impatiently, for he was anxious to depart.

“No; I want twice that. Your wife cheated me. If she had said right out what she expected of me, I would never have compromised myself for such a trifle.”

Rougon dashed the eight hundred francs upon the table.

“I assure you,” he said, “that you will have no more; I beg you to leave to-night, and if you do, I will not forget you.”

Macquart, still grumbling, pushed the table nearer the window, and began to count the gold pieces. He rang the money on the table, and felt of them with lingering

delight; the jingling filled the room. He interrupted himself an instant, and said:

“You promised me some sort of a position, and I should like one in some good country town.”

“Yes, yes, I will attend to that,” answered Rougon. “Have you your eight hundred francs?”

Macquart began to count them. The last Louis fell from his fingers when a sudden burst of wild laughter caused him to start and look round.

Aunt Dide was sitting up in bed, with her gray hair astray upon her shoulders, and her pale face with its crimson spots. With extended arms and shaking head she called out, deliriously:

“The price of blood! the price of blood! I heard the gold—I heard it! And it is they who sold him. Ah! the assassins—the wolves!”

She threw back her hair, and passed her hand over her forehead. Then she continued:

“I have seen him ever so long; seen him with his forehead pierced by a bullet. I have seen people taking aim at him with guns. They kept whispering in my ear for days and weeks that they meant to shoot him, and it killed me. Have mercy on him, good people; have mercy! He shall never see her again—never—never! I will keep him with me always. Oh! do not fire—it was not my fault! If you only knew—”

She struggled forward upon her knees, weeping, struggling, imploring—extending her poor trembling hands toward some lamentable vision that she saw in the dark

shadow of the room. Then suddenly she drew back, her eyes starting out of her head, and from her convulsed throat escaped a hoarse, terrible cry, as if some spectacle that she alone could see filled her with mad terror.

"Oh, the gendarme!" she said, choking and falling back on the bed, where she rolled with long bursts of frenzied laughter.

Pascal watched her attentively. The two brothers, in great fright, retreated to the farthest corner of the room. When Rougon heard the word "gendarme," he thought he understood, for ever since the death of her lover on the frontier, Aunt Dide nourished a profound hatred against the gendarmes and Custom House officers, whom she confounded.

"It is the story of the smuggler she is telling you," said Macquart.

Pascal signed to him to be quiet. The dying woman struggled into a sitting position once more, and looked around with a stupefied air, as if she had suddenly awakened and found herself in some unknown place. Then, with a start, she said:

"Where is the gun?"

The physician put the gun into her hands. She uttered an exclamation of joy. She looked at it tenderly, touched it caressingly, saying in a childish voice:

"Yes, this is it; and it is all stained with blood—fresh blood. Red hands have touched this barrel. Oh! poor Aunt Dide!—poor Aunt Dide!"

Her sick brain took another turn.

"The gendarme was dead," she murmured; "but he

came back; I saw him myself. Such creatures never really die!"

Suddenly, with a furious air, and pointing the gun, she advanced to her two sons, who were crouched in a corner mute with horror. Her loosened skirts trailed after her; her shoulders, bowed under the weight of years, were bare and frightfully wrinkled.

"It was you who shot him!" she cried. "I heard the gold. I had but one poor child, and they devoured him, for they are wolves. Oh! the vile creatures! They robbed him and killed him, and live like gentlemen. Curse them all! Curse them all!"

She sang and she laughed, and repeated these words—"Curse them all!" with a strange musical intonation.

Pascal with tears in his eyes took her in his arms, and laid her back upon her bed. She submitted like a child. She continued her song, accelerating the rhythm, beating the measure on the sheets with her withered hands.

"That is precisely what I feared," said the physician. "She is mad. The blow was too rude for a poor creature whose mind was already weakened by nervous attacks. She will die in an insane asylum as her father did."

"But what could she have seen?" asked Rougon, emerging from the corner where he had retreated.

"I have a terrible suspicion," answered Pascal. "I wish to say something to you about Silvère. He is a prisoner, and there is no time to lose, if you wish to save him."

Pierre looked at his son, and turned very pale, as in a rapid voice, he replied:

"I will go and see the Prefect at once, if you will promise to watch over your grandmother until to-morrow, when we will have her taken to the asylum at Tulettes. You, Macquart, must go to-night—"

He stammered, and tripped over his words, longing to be out in the street again. Pascal looked from his father to his uncle, and then to his grandmother. His instincts as a savant carried him away; he studied the mother and the son with the attention of a naturalist, watching the metamorphose of an insect; and he thought of this family as of a tree which throws out its different branches, and whose bitter sap permeates the smallest stems and twigs. He saw, as by a lightning flash, the future of the Rougon-Macquart family, with their cowardly, hungry instincts, baying like hounds in hot pursuit of gold.

At the sound of Silvère's name Aunt Dide stopped speaking. She listened a moment, and then uttered the most frightful yells. The room was now utterly dark, and the cries of the mad woman rang as from a closed tomb. Rougon fled in dismay.

As he left Saint-Mittre, he asked himself if it were not most unwise to ask mercy for Silvère, from the Prefect. While deliberating on this point he saw Aristide, who, recognizing his father from a distance, hurried to meet him, and said a few words in a low voice. Pierre turned pale, and looked toward the fire which the gypsies had lighted in the distance, and then the two men disappeared through the Roman gate, pulling up their collars to hide their faces.

"That saves me a needless walk," muttered Rougon. "Let us go to dinner; they are waiting for us now."

When they arrived, the yellow salon was resplendent. Everybody was there with the exception of the Marquis, who pretended that he was suffering from rheumatism, and was also on the eve of a little journey—the truth was that he had become so utterly disgusted with these people that he could not sit down at their table, and his relative, the Comte de Valqueyras, had asked him to pay him a long visit at his country-seat.

This refusal from the Marquis annoyed the Rougons, but Félicité consoled herself with the unwonted display in which she was permitted to indulge. She hired two candelabra, and ordered two more entrées and another course, to make amends for the absence of the Marquis. The table, to do justice to the occasion, was laid in the salon, and the Hôtel de Provence furnished all the glass, silver and porcelain. At five o'clock the table was spread that the guests might be struck by it in all its glory as soon as they entered. At either end stood, on the white linen, two large bouquets of artificial roses in vases of gilt-edged china, highly painted.

The little circle could not conceal the admiration aroused by this beautiful sight. The men exchanged smiles and stealthy glances, which meant that the Rougons were throwing their money away. The fact was that Félicité, when she went to give her invitations, was unable to hold her tongue. She told everybody that Pierre was to be decorated, and also to have some fat office; and this

information made them singularly observant. It struck them as a little hard that Rougon should bear off all the honors when they were quite ready to do as much dirty work as he.

Those who had made the most noise and cared least for the Empire were profoundly vexed to see that, thanks to themselves, the very poorest among them was the one to wear the red ribbon in his button-hole! The whole salon should, by rights, have been decorated.

"It is not that I care a sou for the decoration," said Rondier to Granoux, as they stood together in the embrasure of the window. "I refused it in the time of Louis Philippe, when I was Furnisher to the Court. Ah! Louis Philippe was a good king. France will never have another like him!"

Rondier had actually become an Orleanist again! Then he added, with considerable hypocrisy:

"But with you, my dear Granoux, it is vastly different. Don't you think a red ribbon would look as well in your button-hole as in Rougon's? Have not you, after all, done quite as much for the town as he? Yesterday, I heard the whole affair discussed, and no one believed that you could have made so much noise with a hammer!"

Granoux stammered a few words of thanks, and colored like a young girl, as he leaned toward Rondier and whispered:

"Pray do not mention it. But I have reason to think that Rougon will ask for the Ribbon for me."

Rondier became very grave and extremely polite to

every one. Vuillet came toward him, and began to talk of the recompense which their friend was to receive, and Rondier answered, loud enough to be heard by Félicité, that men like Rougon honored the Legion of Honor. The Librarian that morning had received the formal assurance that the custom of the college should be restored to him.

Secardot felt that only soldiers were entitled to the Ribbon, but he was excessively surprised at Pierre's courage, and quietly said that Napoleon certainly knew how to recognize merit and courage.

Rougon and Aristide were greeted with enthusiasm and outstretched hands. Angèle sat on a sofa by the side of her mother-in-law, looking at the table with intense delight and longing.

Secardot complimented his son-in-law on his superb article in the *Independent*, and showed him especial cordiality.

The young man, in reply to his questions, replied that his strongest desire was to depart with his family for Paris, where his brother Eugène was quite ready to push him, but he could not do this for lack of money: he needed five hundred francs. Secardot agreed to give him this amount; and in his imagination saw his daughter received at the court of Napoleon III.

Félicité made a little sign to her husband, and Pierre escaped for a moment from the room. On his return he whispered to his wife that he had found Pascal, and that Macquart would leave that night. He lowered his voice

still more as he told her of his mother's insanity, and bade her keep it to herself, "for it would spoil our soirée," he added. Husband and wife exchanged a look wherein each read the thought of the other: that the old woman could give them no more trouble. The smuggler's house could now be torn down, as the Fonque walls had been, and they would have the respect and consideration of the whole town.

But the guests began to look impatiently toward the table, and Félicité requested them to take their seats. As each lifted his spoon Secardot arose, and with a gesture begged for a moment's attention.

"Gentlemen," he said, "in the name of Society, I wish to say to our host how glad we are that he is to be duly rewarded for his courage and patriotism. I recognize the fact that Rougon by a direct interposition from heaven was retained in Plassans, while those rascals dragged us along the highways. Therefore I, with both hands, applaud the decision of the Government. Permit me to finish. You will congratulate our friend also on the fact that in addition to being made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, he is also to be appointed to a most desirable office."

There was a little exclamation of surprise, a forced smile from some of the guests, and many congratulations.

Secardot asked for a minute more of attention.

"I have not finished," he said. "We are happy, however, in retaining our friend with us owing to the death of Monsieur Pierotte."

An exclamation ran around the table. Félicité felt a sharp contraction of her heart. Secardot had told her of the death of the Receiver, but this sudden and frightful death thus abruptly spoken of in the beginning of this triumphal dinner, was like a cold blast full in her face. She remembered her wish—it was she who had killed this man! With a great rattle of spoons and glasses the dinner proceeded. In the Provinces people eat much and noisily. All talked at once, and spoke of their vanquished foes with some roughness, and of the absence of the Marquis with a sneer. Rondier asserted that the nobleman had been in such terror of the Insurgents that fear had given him the jaundice.

Before the dinner was over, Granoux was very red and Vuillet very pale, but both equally tipsy. Secardot continued to drink with undiminished energy. Angèle sipped glasses of eau sucrée after she could not eat another mouthful.

The delight of feeling themselves out of danger, of finding themselves in the yellow salon around a table well lighted and well spread, made these people a trifle reckless.

The dinner, as one among them gracefully expressed it, was “a true Lucullus feast.” Pierre’s pale face was triumphant. Félicité said carelessly that they would very likely hire poor Pierotte’s house until they could buy such a one as they wanted. As she talked she mentally arranged their furniture in the house across the street.

Suddenly she started, and rising from her chair went to Aristide and whispered in his ear :

"And Silvère?" she said; "where is he?"

The young man, surprised by this question, started.

"He is dead," he answered, hoarsely. "I was there when the gendarme blew out his brains with a pistol."

Félicité shivered. Her lips parted. She was about to ask her son why he had not prevented the murder, but she could not speak. Aristide read the question on her trembling lips, and murmured:

"I could say nothing, for I felt that it was a good thing, though rather hard on him!"

This brutal frankness displeased Félicité. She knew that Aristide never would have made this avowal if he had not been drinking, and if he had not been exhilarated by his Parisian plans and prospects. He wavered to and fro upon his chair. Pierre, who had watched this conversation, cast a glance of entreaty upon his son. As Félicité returned to her chair, she caught a glimpse through the closed window of a candle burning on the other side of the street. The candle was at the head of Monsieur Pierotte's coffin. His body had been brought home that morning. She took her seat, and felt the heat of this candle scorching her shoulders. At this moment the dessert was brought in, eliciting cries of enthusiasm.

The return of the troops, after the carnage on the Plaine des Nores, was characterized by the most hideous reprisals. Men were shot down from behind the walls; others were sent tumbling to the bottom of a ravine by the deliberate aim of a gendarme, and the dead were strewn on either side of the highway. The troops could have

been followed by the tracks of blood they left behind them. At each halt they massacred a few Insurgents: two were killed at Sainte-Roure; three at Orchères, and one at Béage.

At Plassans they proposed to shoot one or more of the prisoners, that the town might feel a proper respect for the new-born Empire. But the soldiers were many of them weary of slaughter, and no one moved. The prisoners, tied hand and foot, listened and waited in a sort of stupor.

At this moment, Rengade, the gendarme whose eye Silvère had put out, approached. As soon as he heard of the arrival of the soldiers and that they had with them a hundred or more prisoners, he started up, shivering with fever, and at the risk of his life went out into the cold and darkness of the wintry night. His wound reopened. The bandage which covered his empty orbit was stained with blood, and drops ran down upon his cheek and moustache.

He ran from prisoner to prisoner, looking in each shrinking face, for he was a most appalling sight; suddenly he cried:

“I have him! I have him!”

He laid his hand on Silvère's shoulder.

The boy was looking out into vacancy—seeing nothing, hearing nothing. Ever since they left Sainte-Roure he had had this same stunned expression. He had obeyed each order given with the docility of a child. Covered with dust, he toiled on like a patient animal driven by a

shepherd. His thoughts were with Miette. He saw her lying upon the flag under the tree, with her eyes wide open to the sky. For three days he had seen only this, and now in the gathering darkness he saw her still.

Rengade turned to the officer, who could not induce any of his men to volunteer to carry out the execution he proposed.

"This fellow put out my eye," he said. "Give him to me."

The officer made no reply, but walked off with an indifferent air. The gendarme understood at once that he could do as he pleased.

"Get up!" he said, shaking the lad.

Silvère, like all the other prisoners, was chained to a companion. He was attached to a peasant—a man from Ponjols, named Mourgue—a man of fifty, of whom hot suns and hard work had made a mere brute. He was much bent, and his hands were stiff; his face utterly stolid, except for a certain fashion of working his eyes, which had a cautious, timid expression in them like that of a beaten hound.

He had left home with his pitchfork over his shoulder only because all the other peasants did, and could have given no other reason why he was on the high road. Why he was taken prisoner, he understood still less. He had a vague notion that he was being taken to his home. All the terrible sights he had seen, the curiosity with which he was regarded, brutalized him still more. He did not speak, for no one understood his patois, and had no idea what the gendarme had said or wanted.

Fancying, however, that it might be the name of his village, he lifted his dull face and said, in guttural tones:

"I am from Panjols."

A loud laugh followed this, mingled with cries:

"Loosen the peasant! Let him loose, I say!"

"Pshaw!" answered Rengade, "the more of these vermin we tread under our heels the better! As long as they are together, they may as well go off together!"

There was a murmur.

The gendarme turned his terrible face toward the disapproving crowd, and they scattered.

A dapper little tradesman hastily withdrew, saying that if he stayed another minute, he should be too sick to eat his dinner. Somebody, who recognized Silvère, said something about the girl in red; then the little tradesman came back for a closer inspection of the lover of the girl with the flag—of the creature he had read about in the *Gazette*.

Silvère neither saw nor heard. Rengade took him by the collar and pulled him up—Mourgue, of course, with him.

"Come," said the gendarme, whom Silvère at last recognized.

The boy quickly turned his head aside. The sight was a cruel shock to him, and he shrank from the one eye of this man, which glittered below the folds of linen.

Silvère walked directly toward Saint-Mittre, Rengade rather following than leading. The field lay desolate under the yellow sky, whose copper clouds cast a strange

and lurid light upon the scene. Never had the spot been so utterly dreary. The tall trestles in the corner suggested a guillotine, and no living thing was to be seen except three gypsies, who with wild eyes thrust their hands from out their cart. They were an old man and woman, and a young girl whose eyes shone like those of a hungry wolf.

Silvère looked down toward the well-known path. He remembered a far-off Sunday when, on a beautiful moonlight night, he had trodden it. How sweet it was then! How clearly the pale rays brought out each twig! Now how cold and ghastly it was! The gypsy girl sang a strange melody in an unknown tongue. Then Silvère remembered that this far-away Sunday was not more than a week old, and that he had then come to say farewell to Miette. It seemed to him years since his feet had trod that familiar path, and when they turned into the narrow alley his heart failed him. He recognized the odor of the grass, the shadow of each plant, and the holes in the wall. A wail seemed to fill the air, ascending from all these well-known objects.

The alley seemed to stretch away as if it were miles long. He felt the wind blow cold and damp upon him. The corner had grown strangely old. He saw the wall rusty with moss; the turf ruined by the frost; the piles of boards mouldy with dampness: it was desolation. The yellow twilight fell like a fine dust over the ruins of all his hopes. He closed his eyes. He saw the alley green and fresh again; it was warm, and he was there

with Miette. Then came December rains, cold and raw; but they were still there, and, sheltered by the boards, listened with delight to the roar of the shower.

In one brief moment he lived over all his life. Miette jumped over the wall and ran toward him, laughing as she came. He could see her now in the dim shadow, and could hear her talk of the birds' nests, and the trees she could climb. Then he caught the soft murmur of the river, the hum of the locusts, and the wind that sighed through the poplars in the Sainte-Claire meadows. How they ran! and how utterly out of breath they were!

He remembered it all. She had learned to swim in two weeks. She was a brave child, with only one fault: she would take the fruit, and he had lectured her. The recollection of their first caresses brought him back to Saint-Mittre. He heard the clocks striking and the closing of the shutters in the houses near by, and saw the last gleam of the expiring embers of the gypsy's fire. It was time for Miette to go. She kissed her hand to him from the wall. He should not see her again—never, never again. A terrible pang tore his heart.

"Come," sneered the blind man, "choose your own place."

Silvère went on a little farther. He was nearly at the end of the alley, and could see a narrow streak of copper-colored sky. There for two years he had spent the better part of his life. The slow approach of death was ineffably sweet to him. He delayed, and said adieu to each thing he loved—to the grass, and to the stones of the

old wall—to all of which Miette had given so much of her vivid personality, and his thoughts wandered once more. They were only waiting until they were old enough to marry. Aunt Dide would have lived with them.

Ah! if they had but fled to some distant village where the vagabonds of the Quartier could not have flung in Miette's face the crime of her father! What happy peace theirs might have been! He would have opened a blacksmith's shop on the edge of some well-travelled road. His old ambition was gone; he cared no more for the showy carriages, but in the confusion of his thoughts he could not recall why his dream of felicity would never be realized. Why should he not yet go away with Miette and Aunt Dide? Suddenly he remembered the fusillade: he saw a flag droop before him, rushing against his cheek like the wings of some gigantic bird broken in its flight. It was the Republic, which lay stiff and stark by Miette's side under that red flag. They were both dead. Both had wounds in their breasts from which the life-blood was slowly welling. His two loves died at one blow, and now he was ready to die too. He saw himself again kneeling at the side of his beloved dead under the trees, amid the smoke of the powder.

But the blind man was becoming impatient.

"Come on," he said. "I am tired of this."

Silvère started. He looked down at his feet. A fragment of a skull lay whitening in the grass. He fancied that the alley was full of voices. The dead were calling

him—the old dead—those whose hot breaths, during those July evenings, had troubled him and his sweetheart so strangely. He knew their voices; he heard them say that Miette should be his once more in some place under the earth more secluded even than their old trysting-place.

The Cemetery, which had sought to fill the hearts of the two children with keen desire, now seemed eager to drink Silvère's warm blood.

"Is this the place?" asked the blind man.

The young man looked about him: they had reached the end of the alley. He saw the flat tomb and started. Miette was right: that stone was for her.

"Cy—gist—Marie—Morte."

She was dead. He leaned against the stone; it was the very spot which her feet first touched as she came over the wall.

The gendarme loaded his pistol.

The thought of dying pleased Silvère. He had longed for death as he marched on that dusty highway. Had he known where Death would find him, the knowledge would have given wings to his feet. To die on this stone, to die in this alley, which seemed to him pervaded by Miette's presence, was a consolation for which he had not dared to hope. Heaven was very good! He waited with a vague smile. The peasant had seen the pistols—until then he had no interest in where they were going. Now, filled with terror, he threw himself at the feet of the gendarme, repeating over and over again:

"I am from Ponjols! I am from Ponjols!"

He apparently thought that he was taken for some one else.

"What do I care where you come from?" grumbled Rengade.

And as the poor peasant, weeping with terror, not understanding why he was to die, extended his trembling hands, hardened and distorted by toil, and stammered that he had done no wrong, the fierce gendarme, impatient at not being able to place the pistol precisely where he wished, shouted:

"Have done with your noise!"

Then Mourgue, mad with terror, began to howl like a beast or a pig whose throat is being cut.

"Will you hold your tongue?" repeated the gendarme, firing as he spoke. The peasant rolled, a heavy mass, at his feet, and then rebounded toward the pile of boards. The violence of the shock had broken the cord which attached him to his companion. Silvère fell on his knees before the tomb.

Rengade had refined his vengeance by killing Mourgue first. He played with his second pistol, raising it slowly, taking aim at Silvère, and dropping it again. The youth calmly looked at him. The gendarme, with his one burning eye, disturbed him. He turned away his eyes, fearing that he would die like a coward if he continued to look at this man with the blood-stained bandage and moustache. As he raised his eyes he saw Justin's head over the wall, just where Miette was in the habit of first speaking to him.

Justin was at the Roman gate among the crowd when the gendarme took the two men away as his prisoners. He ran as fast as his legs would take him through the grounds of Jas-Meiffren, not wishing to lose the spectacle of the execution. The thought, that he, the only one of the good-for-nothings of the Faubourg, would be able to see the sight at his ease, as if from a balcony, caused him to go so rapidly that he fell head-over-heels more than once. He arrived too late for the first tragedy; he heard the pistol-shot as he climbed the mulberry tree. When he saw that Silvère was still living, he smiled. The soldiers had told him of Miette's death, and he waited to see Silvère die with the pleasure which it was his nature to feel in the sufferings of others. Silvère, recognizing this head, with its pale, freckled face and dishevelled hair, experienced a spasm of wild rage and a longing to live. This was the last revolt of his nature—a momentary rebellion. He fell on his knees once more, and looked before him. In the melancholy twilight, he beheld a strange vision—at the end of the alley, at the entrance to Saint-Mittre, he fancied he saw Aunt Dide standing stiff and rigid as if carved of stone.

At this moment the cold muzzle of the pistol touched his temple. Justin laughed. Silvère closed his eyes, and heard the voices of the dead in the church-yard calling him eagerly. In the darkness he still saw Miette under the trees, wrapped in the flag. Then the gendarme pulled the trigger; the child's skull burst like a ripe pomegranate; his face fell on the stone, and his lips touched the spot worn by Miette's feet.

And at the Rougons' that evening—at dessert—gay laughter ran around the table. At last they enjoyed the same pleasures as the rich. Their appetites, sharpened by thirty years of restrained desires, showed ferocious teeth. These unsatiated, hungry creatures welcomed the birth of the Empire, the reign of the eager quarry. The Coup d'État founded the fortunes of the Rougons as well as the Bonapartes. Pierre stood with his glass in his hand.

"I drink to the health of Prince Louis, to the Emperor!" he cried.

These gentlemen, who had drowned their jealousies in champagne, drank this toast with enthusiasm. It was a fine spectacle to see all these people embracing and congratulating each other over the dead body—the body of the Republic that was still warm. Secardot had a happy thought. He took from Félicité's head-dress a knot of red satin ribbon, which she wore over her right ear. He cut it with his dessert-knife, and passed it solemnly through Rougon's button-hole, who with a radiant face played great modesty, and gently pushed aside his friend's officious hand.

"No, no," he said; "it is too soon. We must await the movements of the Government."

"Sacrebleu!" cried Secardot. "Let it be! It is one of Napoleon's old soldiers who decorates you!"

All the salon joined in the applause. Félicité was in ecstasies. Granoux, in his enthusiasm, mounted upon a chair, waved a napkin and uttered a brief discourse which was lost in the uproar. The yellow salon was wild with excitement.

But the bit of red satin, placed in Pierre's button-hole, was not the only red stain in the Rougons' triumphal march. Forgotten under the bed in the next room lay a shoe with a bloody heel. The candle, at the head of Monsieur Pierotte's coffin on the other side of the street, was like an open wound. And afar off, at the end of the alley in Saint-Mittre, a sea of blood was slowly coagulating on the flat tomb.

THE END.

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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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